

POWER-PLAY IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION REFORMS: TEACHERS'
PERSPECTIVE

Dissertation

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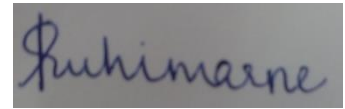


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DECLARATION BY THE SCHOLAR

This is to certify that the M.Phil. Dissertation being submitted by me on the topic entitled 'Power-Play in the Context of Education Reforms: Teachers' Perspective' has been completed under the guidance of Dr. Manisha Priyam. It is declared that the present study has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship or Fellowship to this or any other University.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruhimarne".

(Ruhi Marne)

CERTIFICATE OF THE SUPERVISOR

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled ‘Power-Play in the Context of Education Reforms: Teachers’ Perspective’ is the work undertaken by Ms. Ruhi Marne under my supervision and guidance as part of her M.Phil. degree in this Institute. To the best of my knowledge, this is the original work conducted by her and the dissertation may be sent for evaluation.

(Dr. Manisha Priyam)

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Introduction

Currently, there is a focus on improving learning outcomes and there is an emphasis on teacher development to achieve this. There are many programs underway to improve the skills of teachers or to provide resources that require the teachers to only implement the given plan in order to provide quality teaching-learning experience to students.

Reforms that talk about teacher professional development may not necessarily develop teachers who are critical thinkers but they may rather end up producing teachers who adhere to the values and ideas considered to be normal by a dominant section of society. These reforms may in fact strengthen the ways to control teachers' behavior by standardizing teaching learning processes. On the other hand, teachers who may be thought of being powerless may in fact use certain tactics that influence the implementation of such reforms.

This is a global phenomenon (Berry, 2016; Kumar 2019; Priyam, 2021) focusing on standardization, test-based accountability and use of corporate management techniques. These reforms have changed the positioning and the purpose of education (Hirtt, 2009; Saltman & Means, 2019) shrinking meaningful spaces for teacher voice, taking control of teachers and teaching (Spren & Kamat, 2019; Priyam, 2021).

However, these current reforms do not talk about explicit control rather they emphasize on autonomy and choice. The power of these reforms therefore lies not in the hierarchical structures but in processes seemingly democratic. Control in this context works in a covert way often unnoticed under the veil of self-responsibility and accountability. To examine such an issue therefore requires looking at power as embedded in social relations, influencing people's behavior and fabricating their interests.

The global pattern to which such reforms belong can be broadly understood as being neoliberal. The understanding of neoliberalism extends beyond the realm of economics, responsabilizing people, creating self-reliant entrepreneurial individuals who are not dependent on the state (Ward, 2012). It has commodified welfare (Connell, 2013) and established markets where none existed before (Kumar, 2010; Ward, 2012) leading to

instrumentalization of schools (Hirtt, 2009). It is rather a form of control (Digón-Regueiro & Sánchez-Blanco, 2020) directing the ways in which individuals behave (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The techniques of new public management (NPM), practices of performativity and regimes of accountability have led to a fundamental change in the work and identity of teachers (Smith & Holloway, 2020) making the teacher both a scape-goat and a victim (Ball, 1993).

Iannaccone (1991) defines politics as “the process by which a society’s persistent social values are translated into policy”. The translation of this global phenomenon prioritizing certain values and knowledge is therefore a matter of politics. Micropolitics, a universal feature of all organizations (Hoyle, 1999) is the process that takes place between the invisible spaces of hierarchical administrative structures, through both conflictive and cooperative interactions between members who have their own ideology and interests and employ strategies to further their individual or collective interests.

Thus, seemingly apolitical initiatives like educational reforms and spaces like schools are in fact political; this is the underlying proposition in this study. This study is a concrete manifestation of this abstraction. It renders the abstract concept of power and politics into a tangible case. By examining the reforms and teachers in this light, it provides insights into how educational reforms are not politically neutral but involve a distinctive form of disciplinary and regulatory power.

The objective of this research is to understand how educational reform is political in nature and to understand how power operates in the context of reforms. Given these objectives the research questions focus on the ways in which teachers’ behavior is controlled, how they resist or support and why they do so. More specifically, the questions are:

- What are the ways in which teachers’ behavior is directed or controlled?
- How do teachers resist or support the reform initiatives (the programme)?
- Why do the teachers resist or support these initiatives?

The Case

The decision to do a case study research is largely propelled by the nature of the research topic and the form of research questions. The issue of how power operates in the context of reforms between the reformer and the teachers in a social setting like a school focuses on the explanatory aspect of this social phenomenon. The reform being discussed in this research is also quite contemporary in the sense it is a “fluid rendition of a recent past and the present” Yin (2018) where the behavior of the participants cannot be manipulated. It attempts to concretely manifest the abstract concept of power. This rendering of an abstraction into a real world case is an essential feature of case study.

Drawing from Yin (2018), this scenario makes case studies a preferred choice.

The epistemological orientation of this particular case study is of a relativist nature; pursuing “constructivist approach to capture perspectives of different participants and focusing on how their different meanings illuminate the topic of study” (Yin, 2018).

Specifically, this is a single case study with embedded subunits. The main unit in this study is the whole event of reform and the smallest unit is the individual member (the teacher and the founder). Though the subunits can be selected through various sampling techniques, there was no scope of choice in this study due to the less number of teachers working at that point. By including both the teachers and founder as subunits the study brings in more complexity and opportunity for extensive analysis. Though one may tend to remain focused on subunit analysis, an effort was made in this research to return to the larger case.

Multiple case studies or even two case studies are argued to be better than single case studies, but even “a single case can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, or extending the theory” (Yin, 2018).

This particular case study examines the everyday school practices (the common) providing insights about social processes in light of a theoretical interest (power). This aspect of commonality is what Yin (2018) argues makes single case studies invaluable.

The larger question that the research is trying to address is how power operates in covert ways by fabricating interests, through surveillance and performance measurement; prioritizing certain values over the other. Understanding the ways in which teachers are directed and controlled and how and why teachers respond to these practices in particular ways attempts to visiblize the role of power. Reforms portrayed as neutral, philanthropic ways to improve schools, teachers and children are essentially spaces of power. The naïve notion of how reforms benefit the masses steering away from political tactics is flawed; as they are part of the global economic and political patterns. This seemingly abstract concept can be concretely studied by examining an event of reform. The idea therefore, to select a school where a reform has been implemented is a concrete manifestation of this abstraction.

The main proposition of the study derived from the literature is that educational reforms are by nature political. By understanding power, which is central to politics one can gain valuable insights into the politics of reforms. By examining the seemingly powerless teachers and the ‘politically neutral’ reform mechanisms provide alternate explanations to hierarchical functioning of power.

One of the major factors in deciding the selection of case Yin (2018) argues is to have sufficient access to the data of the case and thus, the selection of this particular organization and this particular school included in the study was largely made due to the certainty in accessing data.

The reform initiative in the school included various programs and themes of action focusing on school leaders, children and teachers. However, this study, considers only the initiative focusing on teachers avoiding discussions on the sports program and school leadership activities also undertaken by the organization. In spite of the involvement of the school principal in the reform, the study has restricted itself to teachers given its explicit interest in examining the role of power in terms of teachers. Thus, by bounding the case, the link between the questions, propositions and case are tightened.

The organization under study works in the underprivileged communities of Maharashtra with school leaders, teachers and sports coaches to build their capacity in order to provide

all children a holistic education. Based on its experience of working with low-income community schools in Mumbai, it identifies leadership and management skills of school leader, curriculum and pedagogy as the problems that schools in the community suffer from; having dire consequences for the students and the community.

The organization articulates its vision and mission as all children attaining holistic education and becoming change-makers along with creating a movement of leaders through supporting and engaging passionate teachers. These values and statements are put into action through three interventions. A transformation and empowerment program enabling under-resourced schools to provide holistic education by working with school leaders and teachers, two year fellowship that trains teachers from the community to not only provide holistic education but also fill the leadership void and another program providing sports and life-skill coaching to children. This evident focus on teachers makes this intervention a suitable case to study.

The selected school is a government recognized unaided school and can be called a low fee private school or an affordable private school. Though it employed more teachers earlier, currently, due to the pandemic there were only six teachers who were working. Due to the unresponsiveness of one of the teachers only the following five teachers were part of the entire study.

Teacher	Grades taught	Subject
Miss A	Primary	EVS
Miss B	Secondary	SST
Miss C	Pre-primary	English/Math
Miss D	Primary & Secondary	Marathi
Miss E	Primary & Secondary	Hindi

The number of reforms introduced in education is growing. The way these reforms are initiated and the values and knowledge they prioritize are the underlying issues that make them important not just in practical terms but also theoretical. Given this focus on an

issue of public interest and national importance (rather global) this case study has the potential to become an exemplar case study as described by Yin (2018).

Data Collection

A research design though understood as blueprint of research or a logical plan of getting from here to there is much more than a work plan. Its main purpose is to “avoid the situation in which the evidence does not address the research questions” (Yin, 2018). Keeping this in mind the choice of interview questions and reflection questions were based on the literature from which the proposition arrived. By ensuring the connection to the literature helped look for relevant evidence while propositions supported the research to move in the right direction (Yin, 2018).

Most popular ways of collecting data are interviews, documents, observations, archival records or artefacts. More the ways of collecting data, better the process. However the pandemic restricted the choice of methods. Though the study largely relied on interview data, a written reflection exercise and an examination of a few documents related to the organization were undertaken. Documentation in this case provided information about the organization and helped gain an understanding about its vision, values and programs thus, providing support in bounding the case.

Interviews can be insightful as they directly focus on topic of the study. Case study interviews are guided conversations rather than structured queries. Thus, the interviews undertaken in this study were semi-structured wherein a list of questions was prepared earlier to guide the conversation; however, any additional information that the participants shared led to a further investigation.

Yin (2018) classifies questions into five levels, level 1 to level 5. In the context of this study it is the level 1 and level 2 questions that are important. Level 1 includes questions asked to the interviewees and level 2 deals with the line of inquiry undertaken by the researcher. Thus, throughout the interviews there were two jobs that were performed – following the line of inquiry and simultaneously articulating that as unbiased questions to the interviewees.

Though this study may fall short on the parameter of using multiple evidences, Yin (2018) argues that even questioning the same participant several times or on different occasions can be considered as a set of multiple sources which was the situation in this study.

Thus, the study in a way adheres to the principle of data collection on using multiple sources of evidence providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. By asking a list of same questions to different participants it attempts to construct validity by providing multiple measures to the same phenomenon. Instead of assuming a single reality, the study by including diverse teachers and the founder increases the degree to which the reality has been captured accurately.

The data from the interviews has been documented in two separate ways. Firstly, as the raw data from the interviews as transcriptions and secondly the report of the case study presented as part of this thesis through the chapters based on data collection. These ways of documentation have enabled in creating a case study database rendering the evidence to be inspected by an external at a later time. The large amounts of data extracted from the database and used in the following chapters to draw conclusions provide little space to second-guess the interpretations. By following yet another principle of data collection that is of creating a case study database the reliability of the study has increased.

Drawing upon multiple sources and summarizing the researcher's understanding of the participants responses at multiple instances during the interviews, along with structuring the chapters in a manner that the reader is able to link the questions, to the data and the findings, a chain of evidence is maintained thereby increasing the construct validity of the information. Internal validity has been maintained by using the pattern matching technique (discussed later in this chapter). External validity and reliability have been ensured by using theoretical concepts, chain of evidence and case study database and by making maximum procedures as explicit as possible.

Thus, by giving due consideration to these aspects, quality of research has been paid attention to.

Briefly the data collection process can be described in the following four stages.

- Stage 1: Documents

A few documents providing an introduction to the organization were read and understood to gain knowledge about the organization its programs, values and goals.

- Stage 2: Introductory call

The purpose of this call was to introduce the participants to the researcher and the research. This was a group call with the founder and the teachers.

- Stage 3: Reflection exercise

This reflective exercise required the participants to provide written responses to questions that were open-ended, reflective and broad in nature. The purpose of keeping them open-ended was to provide the participants an opportunity to express freely without any word limit enabling more descriptive and detailed responses. These responses also provided a background for the interview providing opportunities to discuss them further. These questions required the participant to reflect and hence, a written response strategy gave them the required time to do so, which would not be possible during the interview. (Due to certain constraints the founder was unable to complete this exercise.)

- Stage 4: Interviews

There were three rounds of interviews that were conducted with individual participants after receiving their responses to the reflective exercise. Each interview was of around 30-60 minutes. The interviews followed a logical succession of themes beginning with broad, reflective areas such as views on education and teaching followed then by the role of teachers which is closely associated with individual transformation delving into data collection to explore further the idea of control concluding with a discussion on alternative solutions. Each interview was further divided into parts to be able to cover all aspects of the theme comprehensively. The themes on which the interviews had been organized and the questions framed have emerged through the process of literature review.

Though attached to the literature review for conceptual aspects, the questions provided sufficient scope for empirical investigation by asking participants to share their everyday realities.

Based on how comfortable teachers were with English, a second language (Hindi/Marathi) was used during the interviews/written responses. Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded, then transcribed. Responses are kept anonymous, not revealing the individual identity of the participants or organizational identity or school identity and each time the participants were reminded that the conversation was being recorded thereby addressing ethical concerns.

The process of data collection in this case was not just mechanically recording data but simultaneously locating the contradictions with one another. By being open to contrary evidence during the process, an attempt was made to avoid bias. The design of this study is quite frequent in case study research where the data collection sources are individuals and the unit of analysis is collective. To avoid the distortion that may arise from such differentiation, efforts were made each time to focus on the collective rather than the individual during the analysis.

The Analysis

Case studies are not samples and therefore considering a statistical generalization to emerge from this study is incorrect. The goal here is not to draw generalizations in terms of population but to theoretical propositions; it is rather an engagement in expanding or generalizing theory.

The purpose of analysis here is not to evaluate the performance of the organization or the school or the teachers or formulate judgements in terms of this specific case; rather it focuses on analytic generalizations; extending the narrow single case to broader significance. It sheds empirical light on the concepts referenced in the literature review. The aim of this study is to draw what Yin (2018) describes as level two inferences. These are at a higher level above the case. Thus, the claims that the study makes are argumentative and not numerical thereby going beyond the case being studied.

The analysis began with ‘playing with data’ that is to put information into different themes and subthemes.

The analysis of data draws on two broad approaches to analysis, firstly to rely on theoretical propositions that help organize the analysis and also point to contextual explanations and secondly working with data ground up that provides an opportunity to find a concept from the data which then becomes the point of analysis. One such idea that was found from the discussion is the value of resilience which initially was not a part of the review, however, as it emerged from the data, further analysis was conducted.

Analytic techniques represent ways of linking data to propositions and one such specific technique that was consistently used is pattern matching. It involved matching of empirical and predicted patterns that emerged from the literature.

It is important to mention here that even the structure and sequencing of the chapters progress the theoretical argument.

Case studies are communication devices. Even a single case study has the potential to raise awareness, provide insight, or even suggest solutions to a given situation. Where dense statistics fail such case studies do the task. This is also one of the goals that the study has.

A Few Caveats

One of the methodological shortcomings of this study is the number of sources of evidence. Though multiple diverse set of participants were questioned using the same set of questions to maintain multiple sources, the study would have benefitted by using other methods like observation. Though initially thought of, the current pandemic situation rendered this option unfeasible and therefore restricted the access to data that would have otherwise been possible in normal circumstances. There are various instances where rival explanations have been examined during the process of collection itself; however, there is still a scope to address more rigorously such rival explanations whose rejection can further strengthen the findings of the study.

The chapters of the study highlight that “power is not then a structure but rather a complex arrangement of social forces that are exercised; it is a strategy, embedded in other kinds of relations” (Ball, 2013). ‘It’s All Political’ focuses on the formulation of aims and objectives of education, teachers’ work and working conditions to highlight how choices and decisions related to curriculum, pedagogy and management are implicated in power adhering to the neoliberal discourse and how such reform interventions are by nature political. ‘The Neoliberal Teacher’ is about locating power embedded in the way teachers come to see themselves further engaging in a discussion if they are able to break the loop of data and individualism. It attempts to discern the extent to which teachers have internalized these practices, the extent to which ‘the terrors of performativity’ have taken over the ‘soul of the teacher’.

As my research shows power-play in the context of educational reforms may not be visible at the surface level wherein one can easily identify actions and practices that control teachers’ behavior. It is more implicit and covert.

The decision to use particular terminologies is embedded in power. For example, particular attention needs to be paid to the use of terms such as role and identity. The technical rational idea of teaching under the neoliberalist view confides in the notion of a role of a teacher which is easy to quantify and measure unlike identity which is more complex and interdependent, however as Dewey’s work points out there are aspects of teachers’ work that are not easily quantified (Mockler, 2011). Thus, by resorting to a certain kind of vocabulary, certain connotations of a concept are prioritized. This choice of words is therefore a form of control, controlling which aspect of an individual’s work and identity is prioritized.

The kind of reforms based on testing and measurement threaten to reduce education to training and pedagogies to set of strategies and skills to be used in order to teach prescribed subject matter, such pedagogies of repression are bereft of the fact that social relations and knowledge are implicated in power (Giroux, 2014).

For example, the notion of self-regulated learning (SRL) an implicit theme running through the discussions is a “socially embedded process in which individuals use

strategies to influence thoughts, behaviors and environments in ways that enable them to achieve their academic goals” (Vassallo, 2015). SRL though viewed as a way for individuals to take control of their lives in fact shares a common ground with neoliberalism. The attention SRL received is also during the same time as neoliberalism established itself. SRL produces individuals who are adaptable, self-interested, responsible and operate within the given environments thereby aligning itself with the neoliberal logic of choice and competition (Vassallo, 2012). Both neoliberalism and SRL emphasize “efficiency, productivity, adaptability, choice, personalized learning and self-interest” requiring the individual to decrease the amount of ‘wastage’ by enacting strategic behaviors to adapt to situational demands by being efficient (Vassallo, 2015). Adaptability an essential element of neoliberalism, 21st century skills and SRL expects the individual to adapt to the dynamic, competitive environment to meet its demands (Vassallo, 2015). From a Freirean perspective, when individuals merely adapt without shaping their realities; humanity is denied and therefore adaptation is a “mechanism of control, subordination, and domination” as it focuses on the consciousness of the oppressed and not on the situations that oppress (Vassallo, 2012). Being attuned to environment makes one manageable and not autonomous or empowered because such individuals can be controlled by changing the environmental stimuli as their behavior is linked to such stimuli (Vassallo, 2015).

Thus, popularly posited as neutral and value-free form of emancipation SRL involves problematic normative ways of engagement (Vassallo, 2012) as the adapting individuals are not free from the workings of power but are surrounded by constraints and disciplinary norms (Vassallo, 2015).

Without considering the broader socio-political contexts adult learners who voluntarily comply with ideas like ownership, entrepreneurship, self-improvement, self-responsibility, self-management and positive thinking are likely to become neoliberal subjects as these are not context-free lexicons (Lee, 2017).

Neumann (2019) finds that data and its authority are perceived as unquestionable by teachers; as also found in this study. The teachers in this study who have readily

embraced the ideas of self-responsibility and positive thinking have therefore become neoliberal subjects.

Accountability is not inherently bad, but how it is put to use can either build or destroy trust (Mockler, 2013). In everyday use, accountability is understood as being responsible along with giving an account of one's actions and hence the opposite of accountable is associated as being irresponsible and therefore accountability is assumed to be an intrinsically desirable goal (Lorenz, 2012). Similar ideas are reflected in the study. The use of numbers as shown in this study covertly operates to control the behavior of the teachers; acting as a faceless accountability system it ensures teachers constantly improve. It acts as both a mechanism of surveillance and a practice endorsing self-improvement both of which are embedded in the neoliberal discourse promoting individualism.

Data collection and classroom observations work together to portray themselves as tools to understand reality in a precise manner by considering both the product and process however, as the study has shown these are in fact technologies of control.

Taylor Webb et. al. (2009) argue that neoliberal theory relies on a “discourse of merit, progress, and choice to justify its aims” along with portraying itself as a natural consequence of educational and economic behavior. Teachers may not resist reforms because often institutional success, job security are associated with the need to produce and therefore unsurprisingly may choose quick, proven ways of producing results (Berry, 2016). “The idea of self-improvement and being an ‘entrepreneur of the self’ is premised on individual responsibility for success or failure” (Bradbury, 2019) and therefore “resistance to practices of social reproduction may be interpreted as failure at self-regulation” (Vassallo, 2015). By using individualism and autonomy, neoliberalism crafts a false sense of accomplishment and a safe form of governance (DeSaxe, 2015).

The strategies that limit resistance in case of this study do so by portraying the reform as the need of the hour, shifting the responsibility on self (the teachers) and changing the meanings and scope of work of teachers. Foucault states that power relations can be better understood by looking at forms of resistance and the ‘strategies’ which limit that

resistance (Done & Murphy, 2018). There is hardly any overt resistance that can be identified from the discussions in the study, either the teachers agree completely or by the means of fabrication and being performative they exhibit resistance. When exhibiting resistance becomes this tough, one can only imagine how powerful the discourses that guide these reforms are.

The discussions in this study time and again uncover the hidden workings of power by discussing how conceptualization of teaching, teachers and educational aims are embedded in a neoliberal perspective that produce new kinds of teachers with value systems that support individualism.

The very nature of power that is at play here is hidden and though the study has made sufficient efforts to uncover it, multiple readings of the work may allow the reader to enjoy new moments of discovery each time assuring an insightful experience to the reader who actively engages with it.

Literature Review

Across the world schools are undergoing reforms emphasizing “devolved governance, diversification of teacher qualification routes, setting, monitoring and assessing regional and national standards of teaching to build human, economic and social capital” (Day, 2020) who can survive and “strengthen” (Chiang & Trezise, 2020) the competitive global environments (Day, 2020).

As Saltman & Means (2019) discuss the global education reforms they draw upon five features of the global reform movement given by Pasi Sahlberg (2011) which describe this as a trend towards standardization and setting of prescriptive benchmarks for success; teaching of core subjects, streamlining ways of reaching standardized learning objectives; “transforming education based on corporate managerial models imported from the business sector” and adopting test-based accountability.

Kumar (2019) identifies a global pattern to what is happening to education. He outlines these as being handed over to private capital which leads to disciplines like social sciences and humanities facing closure threats, state-run institutions following private managerial practices, lack or waste of resources being cited as a reason for transfer of education to market environment and mainly education being transformed as a training space for workforce required by the capital than being a source of knowledge.

“The business agenda for schools is increasingly transnational, generated and disseminated through key organizations of the international economic and political elite” (Hill & Kumar, 2009). Priyam (2021) highlights the international endorsement for accountability and efficiency wherein the organizations and associations like the World Bank and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) view learning as a measurable metric.

Not only are the market based reforms growing internationally but there is simultaneous emphasis on creating uniformity and a central authority defining important teacher skills and knowledge. Though progressive in language, they attempt to centralize control (Apple, 2001).

The global education industry not only controls the curriculum and content but also decisions on who teachers under what conditions replacing qualified teachers with untrained, underpaid teachers along with scripted curricula (Spreeen & Kamat, 2019).

The efforts of international agencies with their assessment technologies enable comparing and contrasting cross national variations in educational systems thereby prescribing reform packages that emphasize audit, accountability and efficiency. However, any meaningful space for teacher voice and their role is absent, a serious limitation in knowledge creation notes Priyam (2021) and such policy prescriptions that focus on standardization and accountability dissociate teaching from knowledge and reduce it to a replicable skill.

School programs and objectives of education have also changed; with the emphasis now being on professional skills, problem solving and adaptability skills than a focus on knowledge. The important activity therefore now has become learning to learn, adapting to an ever-changing environment (Hirtt, 2009) positioning education as means of solving economic and social issues which through neoliberal measures like privatization and standardization can be resolved (Saltman & Means, 2019).

Thus, there is a wave of global education reforms changing the nature and meaning of education. These efforts are transforming the way schools operate and ordering differently all those involved therein. There is an increased reliance on the private to solve all sorts of problems, rather a growing belief that it is the private that can resolve all economic and social problems.

The social, political, economic experiments introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s were collectively labeled by the world as neoliberalism. Its first attack was on the bureaucratic nature of the state stating that the public welfare programs encourage laziness and dependence (Ward, 2012).

“Neoliberalism broadly means the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market” (Connell, 2013).

Ward (2012) describes neoliberalism by outlining ten characteristics. Some of the characteristics that are key in understanding the concept are that a neoliberalist views self-interest as a primary element of human psychology believing in the superiority of markets in terms of rationality and efficiency in both economic and social activities, directing the state away from social welfare and towards regulatory, audit functions, economization of social policy, reforming the public domain using market mechanisms, opposing labor unions, professional associations and advocating a stakeholder society.

Digón-Regueiro & Sánchez-Blanco (2020) highlight yet another understanding of neoliberalism by referring to Stephen Ball's work; that is it can also be understood as a form of control under the veil of freedom and efficiency wherein individuals have to respond to targets and evaluations leading to calculation, judging, comparing and improving productivity using certain objectified indicators.

Neoliberalism therefore can be defined as an economic paradigm, an ideology and in terms of policy. Advocating free market and minimum government regulation it is associated with methods such as public managerialism and performativity which give rise to “competition, devolution of authority, relocation of responsibility and quantification of outcomes” (Chiang & Trezise, 2020). It is therefore a discourse where freedom and rationality are the regulating forces for social and economic activity (Chiang & Trezise, 2020).

Neoliberalism has managed to commodify things and spaces that were earlier unimagined to be commodified, social welfare being one of them. Forcing public agencies to compete with other organizations and institutions to win tenders it has managed to commodify welfare (Connell, 2013); establishing markets where none existed before (Kumar, 2010; Ward, 2012).

The neoliberalists complain of the public sector as lacking efficiency, accountability and management structures necessary for making quick, precise prudent economical decisions (Ward, 2012). The technologies of such reforms reduce the ‘distinctiveness of the public sector creating preconditions for various forms of privatizations and commodification of core public service’ (Ball, 2003).

In the context of neoliberalism social problems can be solved through market interventions than state intervention (Ward, 2012) which is elaborated eloquently by Davies & Bansel (2007) by contextualizing it in terms of education. They state that neoliberalism withdraws value from the social good and hence economic productivity in this case comes from positioning education as a product that can be bought and sold instead of government investment in education.

Education through the lens of neoliberalism is human capital formation, building skills needed for productive labor to improve the profits for the economy (Connell, 2013) and therefore education policy and reforms have no longer remained restricted to debates on ideas but have been infused with the logic of profit, they have now become a financial sector (Ball, 2012b).

The focus of educational reforms has now shifted from universalizing educational access to promoting global competitiveness. This shift now places schools in a culture of performance and transforms them into neoliberal entities (Priyam, 2021).

To create a market one needs to restrict the service and therefore in case of education one has to ration it in such a way that it becomes a privilege, that all cannot get. This rationing then ensures commodifying access to institutions and services within them. “There need to be known losers, if people are to be required to pay to become winners” (Connell, 2013).

However, such associations and transformations are not without consequences.

Hirtt (2009) points to two consequences of aligning education to aspirations of industrial and financial power – the instrumentalization of schools to serve needs of economic competition and increasing social inequalities in terms of access to knowledge.

Neoliberal efforts not only transform economies but also reform institutions and the people. As Ward (2012) points out neoliberalism responsiblizes people, creating self-reliant entrepreneurial individuals who are not dependent on state. As he applies this understanding to the system of education, he highlights the process of transformation of

the system into a quasi-market guided by consumer choice and monitored and evaluated by state in order to provide accountability.

Thus, education gets repackaged as an investment moving away from the idea of knowledge for knowledge sake.

As neoliberalism strives to get a stronghold, individualism gains momentum.

Rapt by the perception of their own perceived powers, individuals let go off their collective powers under neoliberalism promoting the culture of individualism; directing the ways individuals behave by making them adopt certain ways to exercise their freedom (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Neoliberalism has redefined the relationship between state, society and economy in which citizenship or social membership does not directly mean they are protected and safeguarded by the state but it is their own individual action and responsibility gives them a position in society. Thus neoliberalism transforms people from socially connected citizens to self-interested, entrepreneurial, rational consumers; thereby putting characteristics like self-interest and competition before others like state-provided protections (Ward, 2012).

There are three underlying mechanisms that essentially lead to this shift in desire, these are the “technologies of surveillance tied to entrepreneurship and thus to survival; heightened nationalism linked to fear of cultural and economic non-survival; and a discourse of moral absolutism tied to the inevitability of global movements” (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Thus, the neoliberalist perspective attempts to dismantle the very nature of people as individuals and as a community repositioning and reordering values. This change in the value system has serious consequences for the working conditions and the professional identities of people.

This market agenda has led to an insecure workforce, weakening unions and collectives, transforming relationships into contracts. This flexibility makes way for casual and part-time employment (Connell, 2013). In the context of teachers, it has stripped them away from the position of autonomous professionals leaving them to the position of mere

employees demonstrating efforts towards outputs and goals through auditing and assessment measures. This Ward (2012) says has led to an audit culture; a culture that keeps the 'free agent' on task as neoliberalism does not trust the alignment of self-interested individual with the organization.

The neoliberal reforms that are characterized by the techniques of new public management (NPM) or new managerialism (Chiang & Trezise, 2020) of auditing, separation of policy making and implementation and competition are also visible in the school reforms across the world (Wilkins et al., 2020). Many nations can now be seen to have applied such neoliberal principles (Weiner, 2020).

The presence of audit culture has led to a shift in the power from the profession to the audit system and its managers. The strategic plans assume great importance and become rather coercive in nature changing the equations of control. The techniques rather than the managers steer the professionals under NPM with centralized decision making processes imposed on professionals who are then directed and observed through faceless accountability systems. This situation that Ward (2012) describes is evident from the pressure on teachers to teach the testable leaving behind students' needs in the audit culture and the culture of accountability (Connell, 2013).

NPM thus is the central mechanism of neoliberalism that reconfigures institutions claiming to convert unproductive public labor to entrepreneurial productive labor (Ward, 2012).

When understood in the context of educators, such neoliberal discourses push them to take a different form of professionalism that values different values for example competition between schools and choice for parents (Wilkins et al., 2020), affecting the general level of trust in the profession's ability, replacing autonomy with steering and management from the top (Ward, 2012) .

The audit culture under the neoliberal regime has led to creation of lists of competencies for teachers that also become lists of auditable performances. In such a scenario Connell (2009) argues that the need for a competent teacher disappears as curriculum becomes the work of the central authorities.

Teachers under the audit culture become mere technicians or “managerial drones” (Foran & Levinsson, 2020) who enact pre-defined best practices and curriculum that are measured through external tests (Connell, 2009). This essentially takes away the intelligent work of teaching.

The role of teachers has earlier received less attention in the calls of reforms due to the advocacy of teacher proof innovations (Villegas-Reimers & Reimers, 1996) but in due course teachers have become central to these reforms recognizing their role in producing learners for the economic and political survival (Darling-Hammond, 2005) however, the nature of their involvement needs to be examined with much detail to understand their real position in this global wave of educational reforms as Priyam (2021) notes the peripheral position teacher voices have assumed and teaching being increasingly viewed as a technically replicated skill, focusing on standardized performance, inputs, losing its emphasis on subject matter and essentially de-professionalizing it. Thus, the teacher is often missing from the talks that happen on improving school quality and learning.

Thus, in an environment dominated by the vocabulary of measurable performance teaching takes a rather technical-rational approach (Taylor, 2007).

Chiang & Trezise (2020) identify reform of teacher training, evaluation and professional development as one of the focus areas of the neoliberal policies associating teacher quality as a key strategy to improve learning achievement, however; occupational culture is not the focus of current discussions on teacher quality (Connell, 2009). Mockler (2020) also identifies professional standards for teachers as one of the key tenets of the global reform movement that has shaped various aspects of teachers’ work.

Sorensen & Robertson (2019) point out that a large number of foundations and corporations have moved into a global policy space with the claim that high quality teachers make a notable difference in the learning and also because the profession “has become directly associated with the support of capitalist accumulation, one of the core problems of education”.

Teachers are most dangerous of workers because of the role they play in shaping labor power; the single commodity on which the whole capitalist system rests writes Rikowski

in his Marxist analysis of labor power. This power of teachers to be the guardians of labor is the reason why Hill & Kumar (2009) write, states spend sleepless nights worrying about teachers.

However, the widespread focus on teachers in the educational policy reform movement has not led to vast resources being assigned to teacher education instead “a new apparatus of certification and regulation for teachers” has been imposed (Connell, 2009).

Thus, the neoliberal reforms that seem to have placed teachers on a pedestal, in reality do little to engage meaningfully with teacher perspectives. Though the language of reforms may talk highly of the teachers, the way they seem to work have in fact diminished the real work of teachers.

This perception of the role of teachers has major repercussions for the forms of pedagogy being used in classrooms. Any form of critical pedagogy that may disturb the smooth running of the capitalist system is therefore to be destroyed. Hence, the strict control of teacher education, training and curriculum (Hill & Kumar, 2009).

There is therefore a deprofessionalization of teachers and teaching (Ward, 2012; Connell, 2013; Priyam, 2021). Their capacity to decide on the curriculum and pedagogy appropriate for their students is undermined creating tensions and contradictions between teachers and the system and the long term effects and short term results (Connell, 2013). It also changes the position of professional standards which are now superseded by outputs. Meeting outputs, pleasing managers who control the rewards replaces living up to professional standards. The professionals suffer from initiative fatigue under the pressure to perform, and continuously innovate. All this changes the process of professional identity creation. It dilutes the conventional meaning of professional life, weakening internal solidarity (Ward, 2012).

In the context of analyzing educational policy, power relations and teachers’ work, Ball (1993) creates a matrix of power relations involving three message systems of the school – curriculum, market and management. Identifying the forms of control, system steering characteristics and arenas of change, he highlights the teachers’ role as either as a

deliverer, tester, technician, commodity producer, performer, entrepreneur, accountable resource or cost.

However, at a broader level such change Ward (2012) argues has led to a shift from broader ideals and ethics to measurable outcomes and objectives, ordering organizations and people in new ways.

Thus, it is necessary to understand neoliberalism beyond economic terms. It operates in ways that redefine identities of people, reordering value systems and reorienting the role of state. If neoliberalism affects the ways of life in such dramatic ways then ““what makes neoliberalism sensible and acceptable?” (Apple, 2017)

Davies & Bansel (2007) point out some of the reasons for this; they state that in such scenarios it becomes difficult to see these choices as shaped by someone else other than one’s own decisions. Another reason why people may not be able to decode the grand scheme of things under neoliberalism is due to the piecemeal functionalism it adopts creating an illusion that the processes are institution specific. Neoliberalism appears to be desirable for one more reason and that is the way it competes and cannibalizes other discourses making itself appear more innocent, and unthinkable (Ward, 2012); a mirage to resolve all problems (Kumar, 2010).

Neoliberalism creates a new type of individual based on the logic of competition, responsible for performance of others and oneself. One therefore, in this process is not oppressed but rather produced. At the centre of all discomforts in resisting such neoliberal practices and ideas is resisting one’s own practices (Ball & Olmedo, 2013).

No wonder when one is blinded by the aura that neoliberalism creates around the potential it holds, putting the onus on individuals, it is hard to find fault in the plan of the discourse and actions of self.

The privatizing effect of neoliberalism on education is quite evident. However, it does more than that. Kumar (2019) lists a number of consequences of the neoliberal onslaught on education such as saying all problems in education varying from infrastructure to bad quality teaching-learning practices can be solved through efficient private sector

participation. It changes the nature of what is taught and how it is taught. The purpose of establishment of institutions changes and so does the positioning of professionals such as teachers change.

Though it may seem that the neoliberal reforms are working towards ‘improving’ schools or universities they are in essence determining ‘how society will be organized and by who’ (Ward, 2012).

Thus, the neoliberal policies that currently guide the educational reforms (Wilkins et al., 2020) are not only reshaping public education but also changing the way education (a product) and teachers (producers) are seen (Digón-Regueiro & Sánchez-Blanco, 2020).

Ball (2003) describes the spread of the educational reforms across the globe as policy epidemic given by Levin (1998). He describes this epidemic as something that not just changes what people do but also changes who they are. Such reforms are not just structural or technical in nature but also reform teachers, what it means to be a teacher; producing new kinds of teacher subjects – essentially it is about changing one’s ‘social identity’ (Bernstein, 1996 as quoted in Ball, 2003).

The deliberation on testing and standardization by Darling Hammond (1993, 2000 & 2005) is enriched by bringing in the aspect of ‘performativity’ given by Ball. The idea of performativity replaces coercion by self-steering, bringing in ideas of self-management and creating a covert form of control – “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed” (Foucault, 1982 as quoted in Ball, 2013). Management in this context increases the power of individuals yet makes them more docile with the market shifting the elements of control from the producers to the consumer. There is a rise in specially trained teacher-managers due to the ‘managerial technocratic mode’ a term Ball (1993) borrows from Therborn (1978) that characterizes “specialization, impersonality and stratified monopolization of intellectual knowledge by professionals”.

Drawing upon works of Hall and Pulsford, Digón-Regueiro & Sánchez-Blanco (2020) define performativity as a “tool by which neoliberalism in education imports market-based logics” whereas Frostenson & Englund (2020) refer to a variety of work to describe the logic of performativity as something that “works through displaying, comparing and

judging the performance of individuals and organizations, so as to incentivize, control and transform them in particular ways, in order to maximize efficiency in terms of input-output relations”. Using Ball’s work Chiang & Trezise (2020) define performativity as an outcome led approach demanding “individual organizational members to demonstrate how their abilities contribute to organizational development”.

Hardy & Lewis (2016) highlight a very important point regarding data; data as symbolic capital. They describe data as a symbolic capital that can be converted to favorable position within schools, a measure of one’s pedagogical worth however; the presentation of such representations of largely numerical data on student learning dominates over actual learning.

These definitions of performativity are also consistent with the concept of performative cultures characterized by “high levels of surveillance as school and systems leaders constantly appraise and assess teachers and their work in the quest for improvement” (Sullivan, et al., 2020). Thus, in the context of performativity, schools though freed from the state to improve educational outcomes are still held accountable to the states through surveillance mechanisms that are both internal and external and high stakes in nature (Wilkins et al., 2020).

Markets are assumed to be governed by effort and merit, rewarding rational choices, depoliticized. This neutral, effort-rewarding nature of markets and its mechanisms then gets associated with sources of evidence for performance. Thus, subtly changing the focus from student needs to student performance thereby making schools with higher performance worthy (Apple, 2001).

The routine of reporting and recording practice that performativity brings makes informational structures and performance indicators the ‘principle of intelligibility of social relations’ (Ball, 2013). Performativity creates a new value system that prioritizes result over processes, numbers over experiences, procedures over ideas and productivity over creativity (Ball, 2013). In these current trends of reforms the teacher becomes ‘both the scapegoat and victim’ (Ball, 1993).

The discourse on performativity, standards and testing and its opposition creates two systems. One produces subjects “whose qualities are represented in categories of judgement and the other vested in a pedagogy of context and experience” (Ball, 2013).

The study by Hardy & Lewis (2016) also resulted in an interesting understanding of data from teachers’ perspective wherein they simultaneously denied and deified and delivered data engaging in a doublethink of data – the “power to hold contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them ... [T]o forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed” (Orwell 1949 as quoted in Hardy & Lewis, 2016).

As everyday practices are flooded with figures, indicators, comparisons and forms of competition, motivations become blurred, self-worth and reasons for actions becoming uncertain. The dilemma here is that of if they are undertaken because they are worthwhile or because one is measured against them. The time-task equation changes, with more time spent on second order activities of performance monitoring and management offset the efforts of first order activities involving direct engagement with students, research etc. – this is the law of contradiction (given by Lyotard). The alienation of self, results in inauthentic practice and relationships with no encouragement to have a rationale and meaningfulness to what teachers do. What is important is what works (Ball, 2003).

In their study in understanding ‘doublethink’ of data Hardy & Lewis (2016) found that focus on delivering data was problematic as teachers engaged in the aesthetics of presentation than messages about student learning. They also noted teachers’ criticisms regarding responsiveness to data as a divergence from classroom teaching to preparing data stories.

The use of performative techniques like performance indicators, rankings and evaluations translate the performances of organizations and individuals into formal records enabling comparisons, evaluations and judgements to be made (Frostenson & Englund, 2020). Emphasis on these techniques conceptualizes a “self-policing” profession subjecting teachers to both self and external surveillance (Wilkins et al., 2020) and can push teachers towards a more scripted form of teaching, reducing their sense of

professionalism (Stone Johnson, 2013 as quoted in Weiner, 2020), devaluing traditional notions of teacher knowledge and teacher professional capital (Wilkins et al., 2020) therefore challenging their idea of what it means to be a teacher (Frostenson & Englund, 2020).

However, performativity is not new, Wilkins et al. (2020) state that performative cultures and school systems have matured; teachers who are now entering the system have studied in the performative environments and internalized its features. They call this the neo-performative generation. This generation works relentlessly to better the numbers that are emphasized by the data driven approach, outcomes and closing gaps; however, issues such as equity and social justice are under the threat of getting sidelined due to the absence of dialogues and dominance of quantitative data.

Holloway & Brass (2017) in their research involving two studies conducted almost a decade apart – No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top during the standards and accountability environment note a change in teacher subjectivities. They noted a difference in teachers' perspectives regarding accountability apparatus – from being external, unnecessary, reductive, undermining autonomy and professionalism to a framework through which they understood and conducted themselves.

Their research shows the power of accountability regimes in creating teachers who readily embrace numerical indicators of quality and constant surveillance. However, they state that this shift is not just restricted to teacher subjectivities but is rather a proof of a shift in governmentality where “objectification, quantification, and measurement are no longer treated as antithetical to teacher professionals, but as precisely what teachers need to know and monitor themselves, improve themselves and fashion themselves as professionals” (Holloway & Brass, 2017).

Smith & Holloway (2020) argue that the “global testing culture is based on the assumptions of positivism and individualism” with the belief that the quantitative test scores represent reality and that the educational outcomes are results of individual action than larger societal circumstances.

The idea of equity gets modified under the neoliberal practices where raising achievement is considered as a proxy for promoting equity; thus following a very reductionist definition of equity (Wilkins et al., 2020).

Context in the case of performativity does not matter; the instrumental nature of the techniques of performativity transcends the circumstances (Frostenson & Englund, 2020). The post performative era that seems contradictory to child-centered principles exists along with a contradictory parallel discourse that is humanistic in nature (Frostenson & Englund, 2020).

The idea of performativity when understood in the light of governmentality, shows the subtle ways in which power shapes behavior. The internalization of discourses of conformity gives rise to self-regulation and enables a form of social control through self-governance (Sullivan et al., 2020).

The self-governing mechanism that emerges from the discourse on performativity enables government to initiate such educational reforms. Given the social efficiency and common good attributes of such reforms, they are less likely to be questioned and gather much support and exercise authority (Chiang & Trezise, 2020).

The context of surveillance that emerges from the discourse on performativity has led to the erosion of trust in teachers (Sullivan et al., 2020). Foucault's idea of governmentality and social control which operate through volunteerism along with the association of teacher's role with national development together result in controlling teachers and teachers complying with this form of control (Chiang & Trezise, 2020).

Professional standards and national testing have narrowed the definition of effective teaching and the way it is evaluated thereby altering what it means to be a teacher (Sullivan et al., 2020 & Mockler, 2020). Though distributed leadership may be viewed in positive light by some, in some scenarios work gets intensified and distributed horizontally and power being distributed in an upward direction increasing control over pedagogy and curriculum through high stakes testing (Anderson, 2017).

Low stake conditions do not go without unintended consequences. Researches show teaching to test at the expense of long term impact of educational processes, a rather transfer of explicit control to self-control through data driven practices and self-evaluation practices (Hangartner, 2019).

Referring to ‘learnification’ a focus on standards, competencies and effective learning has increased the requirement to test further (Hangartner, 2019). With this growing emphasis on performance, success of reforms is based on the success on standardized assessments (Apple, 2001). The testing culture that lays disproportionate emphasis on student test scores has fundamentally changed the work and identity of teachers (Smith & Holloway, 2020).

Teachers are increasingly becoming targets of accountability reforms bringing in teacher focused accountability policies and practices (Smith & Holloway, 2020). Connell (2009) too recognizes the association of neoliberal ideology with managerial voices and accounting practices.

However, accountability is not be confused with professional responsibility. Meanings of the two terms differ quite significantly. Drawing upon the work of Solbrekke & Englund, Sugrue & Mertkan (2016) differentiate responsibility and accountability. Largely the points of difference are in terms of autonomy and self-initiative. Responsibility is characterized by trust, internal evaluation, a certain proactive-ness on part of the professionals who enjoy relative autonomy and the ability to negotiate standards whereas underlying the idea of accountability is control, external auditing, predetermined indicators, compliance and standardization by contract. Whereas Anderson (2017) drawing upon Fenwick’s distinction between professional responsibility and accountability highlights the need for compliance that comes when indicators of performance are externally imposed in a culture of accountability in contrast to the use of professional ethics and judgement in case of professional responsibility.

Hangartner (2019) shows that “NPM policies have been transforming the technologies of control far beyond high-stakes regimes”. Low stakes conditions have given way to “indirect forms of domination that work by data-driven instruments of evaluation and

feedback, leadership and self-reflection". She further notes that the NPM technologies not only work through domination but also through self-control.

The promotion of NPM has created various regimes of accountability (Sugrue & Mertkan, 2016). The focus on pedagogical practices has now shifted to testing, assessment driven practices and evidence based teaching in the context of teacher education (Foran & Levinsson, 2020). The external accountability mechanisms have subjected teachers to new forms of control limiting their professional judgement and compelling them to compete both internally and externally (Anderson, 2017). Testing, standardization and accountability regimes create a one size fits all template for educational reforms taking away the agency of the teacher (Priyam, 2021).

In the wake of new public management practices, teacher evaluation practices have also undergone a major shift – from being self-evaluative to uniform, standard based approaches conducted by external inspectors or supervisors (Huber & Skedsmo, 2016).

Autonomy that can be defined as “the amount of freedom a worker has to schedule their work and to determine the procedures in carrying it out” (Evans & Fischer, 1992 as quoted in Lundström, 2015) largely gets restricted to budgeting, contracting and hiring whereas curriculum and pedagogy are “steered from the top through standards and testing” in the presence of NPM reforms (Anderson, 2017).

Based on the empirical material Lundström (2015) shows that “...teacher autonomy has been reduced by school reforms and restructurings since the late 1980s, regardless of their individual aims, these reforms have collectively created a power structure that distributes power to the state, municipalities, principals and the school market, including ‘customers’, that is, students, at the expense of teacher autonomy”.

The NPM reforms that began with criticizing hierarchical control have in fact led to hierarchical peer relations within schools leading to a loss of teacher autonomy in everyday practices (Hangartner, 2019).

Drawing upon Evetts’s work on professionalism and Apple’s idea of licensed and regulated autonomy Lundström (2015) highlights the shift from occupational

professionalism characterized by collegiality, trust, professional ethics, and discretion to a new form of professionalism – organizational professionalism focused on managerialism, standardization, control and authority; a shift in the extent of autonomy from being free within limits to being under greater surveillance due to the demands for accountability and standards.

Exercise of discretion, Taylor (2007) notes will always vary however; there is no doubt that management practices imposed on schools have influenced discretion.

All this eventually has led to edutainment - seeking what can sell best over what is necessary yet maintaining the sense of urgency but replacing the pressing and most necessary aspects (Marti, 2019 as quoted in Digón-Regueiro & Sánchez-Blanco, 2020).

Research identifies increased teacher workload, work related pressure, personal stress, decreased job satisfaction, distrust, vulnerability, anxiety, excessive burnout and teacher turnover as some of the effects of a culture of testing, performativity and accountability however; the underlying commonality is the “troubled relationship between the use of student test scores in teacher accountability and how teachers feel about their practice and work-place conditions” (Smith & Holloway, 2020) along with labelling of poor children and their teachers as a result of the standardized testing (Apple, 2001).

Apple (2001) notes that teacher education does not stand alone but is connected to “more general tendencies in educational politics” and thus though reforms may overtly look helpful their hidden effects can only be understood in the larger social field of power in which they operate. Though popular opinion may view teachers as powerful opponents of change and teacher unions as politically powerful bodies that can derail reforms, teachers are often subjected to various forms of control political and otherwise and hence seek the need to act collectively to protect self-interest. However, interests and institutions Priyam (2015) notes need not always oppose reform though they are important factors that shape political dynamics of educational policy reform.

Thus, it can be seen that the reforms that emerge from the larger neoliberal ideology and operate through the mechanisms of NPM have tried to increase the control over teachers through discourses of performativity and accountability. These reforms that critiqued the

bureaucratic model and paved way for NPM practices that have in fact subtly often in disguised way created tighter controls, and in the name of professionalism replaced professional responsibility with accountability measures thereby restricting autonomy and increasing compliance. Data has become the sole measure of success and effort; both a feedback mechanism and accountability measure and more importantly the deciding factor of the worth of a teacher. It has now taken the centre-stage position sidelining the real purpose of education.

The ideas of neoliberalism, performativity, surveillance in essence revolve around the question of how power functions through tactics and discourses that fabricate interests to control the implementation.

Given the engagement of micropolitics with power dynamics, its study can have implications for the existing inequalities in the system. From a practical point of view it can therefore provide ways to alter distribution of resources and sources of power to remedy the powerless with some power and reduce inequities (Marshall & Scribner, 1991).

Micropolitics can be characterized as a universal feature of all organizations (Hoyle, 1999).

Power is an integral element of micropolitics (Hoyle 1982; Ball 2012a; Marshall & Scribner, 1991; Pillay, 2004; Blasé, 2005). However, power can be distinguished as formal and informal (Blasé, 2005) or within the larger concept of power, influence and authority can be understood as its two aspects (Hoyle, 1982). Both these aspects not only differ in their nature and source but also in the larger areas of study where they become the central concepts. Authority is legally supported, coercive, embedded in the hierarchical structures, and is often the focus of administrative theory. Influence on the other hand is not fixed and emanates from personality, access to material and information resources, and is the focus of micropolitics. Though power becomes the focus of most studies on micropolitics, Pillay (2004) identifies lack of power as an important aspect of micropolitics, where silence is also an expression of micropolitics.

Interest is yet another important element of micropolitics (Hoyle 1982, 1999; Ball, 2012a; Marshall & Scribner, 1991; Altrichter, 2001). Interest is the content of micropolitics. Individuals can come together with a common concern to form interest groups or interest sets, the latter are loosely structured and infrequent. Autonomy, status, reward are linked to personal interests; commitment to a particular form of practice is part of the professional interest and commitment to a political party is by nature a political interest. However, not all these types are looked at with equal respect. Professional interest being highly respected the other two interest often get attached to it and therefore resistance is expressed through professional arguments than personal and political (Hoyle, 1982). Later managerial and policy-oriented interests were added to this list (Hoyle, 1999).

The third major element of micropolitics that is reflected across many studies is conflict (Ball, 2012a; Marshall & Scribner, 1991; Blasé, 2005; Pillay, 2004; Altrichter, 2001). Ball (2012a) understands schools as arenas for struggle with conflicts between members of diverse ideologies. And therefore to understand the nature of the school, an understanding of these conflicts becomes inevitable. However, this perspective is different than that of Blasé who also includes the study of cooperative processes along with conflictive processes (Blasé & Bjork, 2010). Altrichter (2001) also includes both these processes along with power dynamics as mentioned earlier but also goal diversity (also included by Ball, 2012a) in the description of key elements of micropolitics.

Other than these recurrent elements there are various other elements of micropolitics that different studies highlight for example, strategies (Hoyle, 1982), goal diversity, ideological disputation, control (Ball, 2012a). Pillay (2004) identifies organizational goals and objectives and the researcher herself /himself as some of the other factors that shape micropolitics and its environment.

Similar to the above descriptions of micropolitics which puts all these aspects together is one of the earlier definitions given by Laurence Iannaccone who coined the phrase 'micropolitics of education'. This definition consists of the political ideologies of the people of the social system of the school namely the teachers, students, administrators within the school; secondly the interaction between them and lastly the influence of the external systems (Iannaccone, 1991).

Based on the above discussion, a comprehensive description of micropolitics can be drawn. It therefore can be described as the process that takes place between the administrative structures (Hoyle, 1982) through interactions that can be conflictive and cooperative between the members of an organization that is characterized by goal diversity; who have their own ideologies and interests who employ strategies and tactics using their sources of power or silence as an expression to further their individual or collective interests.

A layman understanding of micropolitics is that the micro provides space and scope to explore individual schools. Each school is unique in its character, even though they might on a broader level belong to and adhere to the same system guidelines they still are different in many ways (Iannaccone, 1991). In the context of reforms micropolitics has the potential to impede or facilitate reforms in schools (Blasé & Bjork, 2010).

The study in the field of micropolitics has developed over the years. With Hoyle (1982) feeling the need to invent examples to discuss micropolitical strategies in educational organizations, Blasé and Bjork (2010) refer to the growing number of micropolitical studies to highlight the critical role of micropolitics in the context of reforms. Despite the increase the number of studies, they still underline the need for further exploration in this field.

Though interest and conflict appear as a frequently mentioned element of micropolitics along with control, goal diversity and ideological differences; power seems to take a more central place than these elements also influencing them. It is with Foucault's idea of disciplinary power can one see the scope and power of 'power'. Though Foucault described three forms of power – pastoral, sovereign and disciplinary; it is the concept of disciplinary power that helps explain the panoptic nature of power.

The idea of stealth forms of power (Taylor Webb, 2008) also talks about such nature of power that fabricates interests. On the continuum of stealth forms of power and micropolitical visibility the two extremes are covert (potentially witnessed) forms of power and panoptic (manifesting in desires) forms of power. Surveillance along with performativity (performance accountability systems) in the context of schools explains

how interests are fabricated. Surveillance takes root from the macropolitical discourse on monitoring like data monitoring but also from unspoken expectations and norms that are reiterated through principal's observation of teachers in classrooms. "Fabrications (e.g. test scores) then are micropolitical performances circulated within schools in order to refract macropolitical gazes" (Taylor Webb, 2008).

Foucault does not look at power as something that is wielded as a thing but rather that it is embedded in social relations. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon illustrates Foucault's idea of disciplinary power – a power that regulates the behavior of people through surveillance. Emanating from this idea of power are three techniques of control – hierarchical observation, normalization and examination also termed as micro-technologies of power (Bourke, Lidstone & Ryan, 2015) or disciplinary practices (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998).

People can be controlled by merely observing them as the panopticon shows - a tower surrounded by a circular structure of cells visible from the tower. The people in the cells do not know if someone from the tower is observing them but they must assume they are being observed. Discipline by imposing norms – normalization enables judging if behavior is normal or abnormal. These norms are internalized in a way that do not require observation and are performed without any surveillance. Prevalent discourses, group control which lead to self-discipline ensure people behave in the 'normalized' way (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Examination is a combination of both hierarchical observation and normalization (Gutting & Oksala, 2018; Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). Examination documents people's behavior allowing power systems to control them by formulating categories. "Caring is always also an opportunity for control" (Gutting & Oksala, 2018). Thus, these mechanisms help understand the otherwise invisible disciplinary and stealth forms of power.

Thus, power can be understood in three ways – overt, covert and panoptic. The overt powers that result from the hierarchical roles can be studied through administrative and management theories. The covert can be explained by exploring the influence aspect of power, studying the tactics used by the members to bargain power during negotiations trying to further their interests. Panoptic power which fabricates interests of members

itself and exercises control through mechanisms of observation, normalization and examination can explain how processes that seem participatory and democratic may be forms of disciplinary power.

Therefore, to understand micropolitics is to understand how power operates. It is these covert and disciplinary forms of power that the research proposes to study. How does power function through tactics and discourses that fabricate interests to control the implementation of reforms is the larger question that the research proposes to engage with.

It's All Political!

Politics can be viewed as a “three sided equation involving management, people and their actions” (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). This chapter engages in a discussion on these aspects. It looks at initiative, the tools it uses to manage teachers and teachers’ work. The repositioning of education as a means to an end with teachers increasingly working in a culture of performativity and NPM is a result of the neoliberal discourse from which such reforms emerge. The framing of the purpose of education, the choice of certain pedagogical practices, emphases on certain curricular orientation, the changing descriptions of teachers work are the “basic molecules of power” for they are about “individual choice, interactions and behaviors that together produce more general social patterns” (Ball, 2013).

Reforms are essentially political in nature (Horn, 2002). Their messaging and introduction are in essence strategic events as public agreement is what they sort to achieve. Reforms are different from changes as they do not transform systems but change parts of it that seem wrong. Reforms, specifically educational reforms are not restricted to education alone, but are part of the larger political and economic order. To understand the political nature of educational reforms is to understand the context in which they are introduced, how they are introduced, who introduces them and for what. It is equally important to note who bears the cost of such reforms, and how education – the curriculum and pedagogy; and those involved in it like the schools, principals, teachers, students and parents are transformed. This study focuses exclusively on teachers to bring out the power-play in the context of educational reforms.

The founder of the organization who is also the one leading the initiative in the school is a computer science engineer having worked in the corporate world for about two years who wanted to do more and when he came across the Teach For India Fellowship (TFI) he signed up for it. The fellowship made him see the disparity in education not only in terms of the learning outcomes but also the living conditions and factors outside of school that influence the “life outcome”. Though he had not decided to get in the “development sector” there was no turning back after this exposure he says. His experience in the classroom and the fellowship moved him a lot and so much so that he “wanted to solve

this problem”. This feeling was influenced by two sources one, the empathy and second the understanding of the privileged position he himself came from. He then goes on to mention the pervasive nature of the problem by taking support of the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) reports from where he draws the conclusion that this problem is not restricted to a particular economic category but concerns most of the children. His experiences led him to understand that this problem requires a sustainable change and

“...Not be solved by a person coming from outside, it would rather take a movement of leaders and people in the community to take charge of it to make it more sustainable”. (Founder)

This understanding is what set the foundation for his organization where school leaders and teachers from the community drive the school transformation process themselves.

The vocabulary such as ‘life outcome’, ‘movement of leaders’ seems to be borrowed from the organization from where the founder has had his foundational training and entry into education – TFI. TFI was founded as a means to address the educational inequity at scale with the belief that a “people’s movement that needed to come together to provide every child in India an excellent education” (website). TFI is based on the Teacher For America (TFA) model that places leadership at the core of the solution. At a global level it is part of the Teach For All Network which is active 59 countries.

Thus, the influence of TFI is quite evident on the founder’s understanding of the crisis in education and the formulation of solutions. There is no space currently to describe the origins of TFI’s understanding of the issues of education and locate its ideological position but it is important to understand that TFI is the major source of influence on the founder. And hence, time and again one shall see the convergence of ideas (or ideologies) between the founder and TFI and therefore, there is a scope though in future to study how such networks influence and promote certain practices on ground.

Thus, the reformer in this case comes from a privileged background, harnessed with the ideas proposed by a leading NGO. It is also important to note that the gender of the reformer may also influence the decisions taken by him. Though the issue of gender is not what the research intends to explore, the conversations with teachers have brought it

to light and is definitely an area that future research should take up. Power cuts across class, caste, gender and other aspects. Thus, it is important to keep this intersectionality in mind when we read the responses.

The group of teachers who participated in this research was not selected; these were the teachers that were working at that point in time in the school. Due to the pandemic this school currently had only six teachers working. Initially all the six were included however, due to the unresponsiveness of one of the teachers, only five teachers participated in the entire research process.

It may not be surprising that all the teachers in the group were female. However, diversity was maintained in terms of the subjects and the grades they taught, their age and teaching experience. Apart from this there were a few teachers who apart from their teaching responsibility also performed the role of the coordinator or supervisor for that section.

To maintain confidentiality teacher names have not been revealed, instead each teacher is identified as Miss A, Miss B, Miss C, Miss D and Miss E.

Majority of the teachers in this research did not come in to the profession because that was their goal or dream or they aspired to become one, rather it is their financial, social, cultural background that made them choose this profession. In spite of this not being their first choice, all of them still enjoy being a teacher. Their reasons to be a teacher are not just financial, but also serving personal benefits of varied nature. Respect, improving one self, enjoying being with the children, benefits for one's own children, an opportunity to work – sort of a liberation or the feeling of independence and empowerment yet maintaining the cultural boundaries are a few themes that can be identified from the discussion. Thus, when their responses to reforms and the expectation from them at work are looked into one needs to keep in mind their reasons and expectations from the job and hence, though one teacher may resist or support the reform another may not because their expectations from work and their reasons to become a teacher may be very different and as long as that expectation is fulfilled, a teacher may continue to support a reform.

Though Miss A's mother was a teacher, she did not always want to become a teacher. Initially working as a staff nurse she chose to become a teacher after marriage explaining,

“after marriage, because of my in-laws, you know after marriage life changes ...” When asked what kinds of family restrictions she faced that she thought becoming a teacher was better than nurse? She replies without much elaboration, “Yes, because family allowed to go and teach”. Starting her career in teaching as an assistant teacher she now performs the role of an academic coordinator for the primary section apart from teaching Environmental Studies I & II for the grades 3, 4, and 5. She has now been teaching in this school for three years with an overall experience of about 4-5 years she states.

Miss B has been teaching for 10 years and in this school for 2 years. She also agrees that it was not always that she wanted to become a teacher. Neither did she give it a thought if she wanted to become a teacher or not. Before marriage she looked for a job for fun but now she says it is a necessity. The financial crisis in the family pushed her to “using her education” she says. Beginning with home tuitions, she then realized that it would be better to work at a place where she could enhance her abilities and being in education would also benefit her own children.

“Like in the school time I always told my teacher that I want to become a teachers but I was not so much serious about it because I belong from the family where jobs for girls are so much restricted. So there was nothing like that in my family that I have to do a job and all. But because of certain reasons I joined school then I thought that yes, this is a reputed place where you get respect and love from the kids so I thought it is a very nice place to enjoy and also to learn.” (Miss B)

She is now also a supervisor in the secondary section.

Miss C who teaches in the pre-primary section and also shares an overall responsibility of taking care of that section of the school. Though she has been working in this school since 5 years, initially she worked as an executive in an international company. When asked about the reasons for change in the profession, she replies,

“my husband told me you don't work in retail because in their family, they are not allowing like woman to go out and do jobs and all” (Miss C)

And it is after requesting him that she got the “permission” to join the school.

Miss D has been teaching since 20 years and 13 years in this school alone. She is a Marathi language teacher and had always wanted to be a teacher. Her liking for teaching developed since her own school days when she would teach her friends.

Whereas Miss E is the Hindi language teacher and this is her second year as a teacher. Having joint the profession just after completing her studies, she states that from the beginning it was her goal to become a teacher.

Educators may respond to reforms in a number of ways like sustaining, advancing, resisting or actively subverting reform efforts however, their agency is determined by a dynamic that is “shaping and shaped by the structural and cultural features of the school and society” (Datnow, et al., 2002). Thus, there is no doubt that the social, historical and economic experiences of those involved influence their perspectives but I would further like to add to this dynamic the role that gender plays.

With most proprietors being men and all of the teaching staff being young women, the gender dynamic cannot be ignored. The vulnerable positioning of the largely female staff characterized by low wages constitutes gender discrimination (Spren & Kamat, 2019).

A big part of the intervention was teacher training, a support in form of in-service teacher training. And this is the specific initiative in which this research is anchored. This was started with an orientation focusing on sharing with them the different competencies that are focused and what they are bringing in, explaining the how and what of the intervention followed by targeted workshops a session on making smart goals, classroom culture, behavior management, making engaging lesson plan with a focus on teaching based on skills than knowledge based teaching, learning to make objectives based on textbooks along with classroom observations wherein once a month a teacher would be observed at least twice once by the school and once by the founder. And then there are assessments, standardized assessments which TFI also uses; which help understand the current reality in terms of where the students were and what goals are to be formulated.

“I feel it was taken very positively because again, when once we did the assessments It was very clear that the students were struggling and but it was not taken in a negative sense looking at like, okay, you have been teaching for five

years, 10 years, why haven't the students learned anything was taken in a more like a positive approach? We have been teaching in a particular way for so long, but we haven't achieved the desired outcomes. Can we change now?" (Founder)

The orientation he states really helped where -

“why we were there and what we were doing, and as we decided the goals and everything ... and we talked about achieving those, how do we achieve that ... it was not like something that is there was forced upon them”.

Underlying this process is the use of language and messaging, the art of rhetoric. At a surface level it may be about curriculum, assessment etc. but it is indeed about prioritizing values, knowledge, certain economic views and reordering social relations. Datnow et al. (2002) rightly point out that the choice of programs and their presentations are politically strategic events. They argue that consensus is achieved and is not a mere outcome of shared culture thus pointing not only to the politics of consensus achievement but the role of power and the fragility and the dynamic nature of the entire process.

The reform intervention discussed in this research does not really transform the system but within the given boundaries of the system attempts to tweak a few aspects like assessments, teacher training, pedagogy. The goals towards which it works are set to improve learning outcomes and teachers without changing the larger structures. It essentially works towards betterment of certain aspects and it is highly unlikely that something different will emerge after its implementation. Thus, I term this intervention/programme as a reform.

This kind of reform can be termed as externally developed reform design which as the name suggests is developed by an organization external to the school to bring about an improvement (Datnow et al., 2002).

Given the political nature of reforms, their understanding requires the understanding of power which includes the understanding of the reformer, power they wield and wish to attain and the consequences on those affected. Though reforms may target a group or a

specific they are essentially a part of a pattern that either changes or maintains a certain economic, political, social or cultural view.

This discussion identifies the political nature of reforms. The reform intervention attempts to build consensus among the teachers by using evidence-based and data driven assessments, which are not free from criticism. Jean Dreze who argues against the linear translation of evidence to policy provides valuable insight here. Whether something should be done or not involves value judgements. It requires one to reflect on the value systems that a decision might favor or conflict with. Priorities also play an important role; mere evidence does not guarantee a change in policies. Who advises whom influences how a same set of evidence is portrayed and policies are made. Thus, consensus building though attempted through ‘objective’ methods is political at heart. What values are prioritized, what solutions are adopted, who initiates it, and who does the work are eventually spaces where power operates.

Seemingly, apolitical spaces and events therefore, in fact are highly political. By realizing the power relations and politics one can thus identify the marginalized values and voices.

The basic idea on which the organization is based on is that the leadership of the community. An active community engagement is important but by stating that the problem cannot be solved by a person coming from outside is to put the entire responsibility on the community and ignore the institutional influences and power to change. People’s movements are essential but so is political will and institutions. This freeing of the state from its responsibility towards people and their welfare is reflected in his idea of a responsible citizen.

“responsible citizen is like when the people are being empathetic they are sort of trying to collaborate and solve the problem that they see rather than complaining about it and not doing anything about it” (Founder)

At the surface it seems like a normal statement talking about empathy, taking initiative and solving a problem but a much deeper look at it reveals the individualism embedded in it. It is putting the onus of your welfare on the individual and the group of people who can initiate programmes of welfare, in other words it is sort of freeing the state from its

responsibility of welfare and emphasizing individual effort. These privatized efforts though collaborative are implicated in power.

“The idea that everyone should be an entrepreneur is distinctly neoliberal” (Fitzsimons, 2002).

Spreen & Kamat (2019) identify certain domains that have led to the creation and expansion of commercialization of education in India - the evolution of low-fee private schools (LFPS), growing interest in public-private partnerships and an ecosystem for school privatization which include funders, incubators, solution providers, consultants etc. who influence and promote market based education programs.

There is a Global Reform Education Movement (GERM) focusing on standardization, test-based accountability and corporate managerial styles in which the current reform can be located in. The ideas of performativity and new public management embedded within the discourse of neoliberalism are at play in the context of such educational reforms.

Neoliberalism in the context of education creates peculiar individuals with specific values and positions education in a certain way such that both are in-line with the logic of market. DeSaxe (2015) argues that neoliberalism in the context of schools prioritizes individuality, competition and self-meritocracy. The shift in the positioning of education can be identified by investigating the purpose of education as understood by the participants.

The purpose of education as described by the participants varies from employability, to creating a responsible citizen, development of skills, adaptability, and exposure to career options.

“Purpose of education, is providing the children the opportunity, exposing them to different career options and making them aware of those things. And actually providing them that pathway to become what they are passionate about. And it's not only limited to just literacy and numeracy, but also, as I said, like, figuring out what they want to be in life, like having the freedom to imagine and a lot of focus should be there on developing the life skills 21st century skills like collaboration,

creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and the assessments. I mean, students should be given an opportunity to apply what they have learned, apply the knowledge and skills and assessments should be in that way. Like through a project, either doing collaboratively or individually, and not like a test of the knowledge, the coverage they can remember. And also, what I feel is the students should learn about values also and live the values.” (Founder)

The founders’ ideas on the purpose of education revolve around the idea of pre-vocational knowledge that gives insight into what it is to enter that particular occupation but does not prepare students for a specific occupation (Winch, 2002).

“It is to help students gain the knowledge and the skills So, they can easily be able to function in the societies and all students need to be provided with the necessary skills at least they can they have the knowledge so they can become productive citizens in their societies and also they will qualify for different job positions”. (Miss C)

“To develop self, society and nation. To make the children realize about their rights and responsibilities. To make them good responsible citizens. To identify and develop their abilities. To develop a talented, conscious and good character generation. To be able to differentiate between right and wrong. To make them self-dependent. To improve knowledge, abilities and develop personality. Develop emotionally, physically and financially. To be able to navigate the world. Prepare to live a happy and prosperous life. To live a good life, develop employable skills. Develop kindness, confidence and responsibility. To remove caste, religion, and other differences from children and develop brotherhood, nation love (patriotism). To be competent and aware”. (Miss D)

“In today’s life job is very important, people around say if you are educated then you need to have a job if you are educated and don’t have a job then its waste”. (Miss E)

The discussion on the purpose of education is anchored in the language of skills and global competitiveness however; such views potentially reduce schooling to what is functional now and here (d'Agnese, 2019).

An argument put forth by Winch (1996, 2002) summarizes the participant's view of purpose of education. He states that education is preparation for adult life, including the three phases "individual fulfillment, civic participation and vocation" and hence the concerning question of how to live is not devoid of ethical values reflecting the values that society considers important. "What society considers important" is to be paid particular attention to for what values society may come to uphold is not always what all the people come to agree with, these values are often not open for public debate and are usually representative of the influential and powerful. Thus, questions of good life and selection of values are not isolated from issues of power. The choice of certain values to be pursued and upheld is the way power operates. Subjecting the masses to these values therefore is a form of control.

An economic/vocational aim is not inherently wrong to have but an overemphasis on it is not without consequences. Though there can be different aims pursued and emphasis laid on certain aims there needs to be a balance between the liberal and vocational aims for education; because an education that does not prepare for work would not be accepted by many and only giving preparation for work kind of education shall provide no "intrinsic or social satisfaction" (Winch, 1996). Thus, he argues for an inclusion of personal and social dimension along with a technical one which strikes a balance between independence and interdependence making education meaningful.

Though the conversations swing between instrumental and intrinsic purposes the role of education in questioning the existing structures, processes and values deemed important by the society remains unaddressed; it is rather the adaption to changes that is focused. Neoliberal education thus in the end makes individuals adapt to what is required by societal and economic needs (d'Agnese, 2019).

According to Tyler aims of education are causally brought about through educational experiences, they are objectives that can be reached and the changes are described in advance (Harðarson, 2016).

“Learning objectives are very important because whatever we discuss in the vision sounds very interesting and nice, but then when you get to work and deliver in the class, unless you have an outcome or goal working towards it becomes very difficult and it would be dependent on what kind of teacher is, how much knowledge, resilience and skills the teacher has”. (Founder)

“We have to complete our objective. Because we can’t move further. If we don’t complete the basic then how do we move to higher level? Without objectives we cannot take a class and teach. We should know at the end of the class what the students should know.” (Miss A)

“It is also important for the teacher to know, to ensure her focus on what is she going to teach and children to know what they are going to learn, so that both don’t diverge from the focus.” (Miss E)

The teachers see learning objectives as both a planning tool and a tracking tool; also indicating a clear hierarchy in the sequencing of the objectives and linking them to assessments

It is evident from the responses that the objectives are tangible student actions that are to be achieved at the end of the class. This idea of objectives aligns to the Bloom’s Taxonomy which is quite popular in the arena of writing learning objectives. Bloom was a successor of Ralph Tyler who viewed “education as a process of changing behavior of learners” (Harðarson, 2016) and argued that they should be specific enough to be measured. Such pre-defined ends; argues d’Agnese (2019) takes away the ability of the students to imagine a different world.

The founder however expresses the limitations of learning outcomes in capturing his idea of effective teaching. He explains,

“the learning outcomes that are currently there are academic oriented, but if there are outcomes that talk about values and life skills then I would say yes, but these are only related to academics and do not talk about if the child is able to work in a team, come up with a solution in a challenging situation”.

There is therefore, a compartmentalization of the educational experience as academics and value oriented. Values are an inherent part of the experience and breaking them into objectified abstract outcomes can only devalue them. The practice of values is a continuous integrated process in everyday life, rather than a one-time outcome to be checked off during an isolated experience.

Education serving predefined aims that are external to the process of education, imposed by authority can render education as mere means making the process unworthy while emphasizing the importance of the end as worthy or worthwhile argues Dewey (Harðarson, 2017).

When aims become guidelines for designing curriculum, they take the form of top-down design beginning with a clear statement of what is to be achieved flowing downwards to the details of implementation. Thus specifying what we need in order to get what we want; in contrast to the bottom up design which realizes what one has then figuring out how to use it to get what we want at the same time not excluding the purpose (Harðarson, 2016).

Such aims therefore are at the danger of excluding the contextual realities and making a case of performativity as context in the case of performativity does not matter argue Frostenson & Englund (2020) the instrumental nature of the techniques of performativity transcends the circumstances.

The focus on making the educational experience more trackable is evident from the discussion. There is a thrust to reduce almost all aspects to simplified objectives that can be monitored. These practices eventually become the surveillance mechanisms for the authorities to track teachers and their work. Objectives and aims are not inherently harmful but using their watered down, reductionist versions is concerning. The

unquestioned acceptance of the teachers to use these is to allow their work to be controlled.

Thus, by framing objectives that are specific, measurable, reachable and defined in terms of behavior subscribes and prioritizes certain values and purposes of education. It is true that actions in such situations can be focused and tracked however Dewey would argue that action that is limited to a fixed and given end may attain technical efficiency but that is the only aspect it can achieve (d'Agnese, 2019). Therefore, by subscribing to such a model we can at best achieve efficiency but we are talking about humans and not machines and therefore what is missed is much more valuable here than what it is being achieved.

“Teaching opens your mind to new ideas, makes you think, question, therefore teaching is not giving answers but providing the knowledge and awareness of things asking them to be curious and ask questions, think and be creative and how can they use knowledge to build on something” (Founder)

“Effective teaching is to use teaching aids and all, lesson plans should be there, teacher should be aware of the concept to be taught, should go through, planning is very much essential” (Miss A)

“To teach effectively is to teach in an enjoyable way such that it is understood completely. For this one should resort to effective teaching methods. The classroom environment should be safe, joyful, respectful and peaceful. There should be an inclusion of audio-visual experiences as well. By the use of different teaching aids, technology, pictures, maps, diagrams teaching becomes effective. To create interest and for the topic to be able to understood quickly, the topic should be taught using games and activities. One should also include expressive reading of poetry and drama for prose. Effective teaching means whatever the teacher has taught has reached every student. Effective teaching should bring a change in the students' behavior and conduct. Education can be effective if it can be brought to use in real life.” (Miss D)

The description of effective teaching that emerges from their responses is rather technical in nature, enlisting the skills and process; whereas the founder's idea invokes values and temperaments. Though the founder includes much broader issues in his description of effective teaching, the teachers' ideas largely revolve around the narrower aspects of teaching learning mostly restricted to the classroom.

The founder lists a wide range of functions that he expects the teacher to perform. Like administrative functions, planning functions, that is making unit plans, long term plans and daily lesson plans along with behavior management and culture plans, and then function related to the community which is to maintain relationship with the community those related to teaching and learning may involve making individualized goals for the students, assessments and gradation. And then also, others, like communication with the principal regarding how the progress of the class is.

“A teacher has many tasks, identifying the weakness of children, work on them, action research, improve the results, bring out the skills and qualities to better the future of the students. Syllabus completion, unit planning, question paper preparation, result making, correction of papers, updating attendance, giving mark sheet, checking if students are regularly attending if someone is absent 2-3 times a week then calling at home and asking the reasons, if they are sick then we have to go and conduct a visit to understand the reality.” (Miss E)

Planning (Miss A & Miss B), data collection and management (Miss B, Miss C & Miss D) along with nurturing talents (Miss D) are discussed by the teachers though complementary activities to teaching take up more space in the discussion.

The recurrent themes of planning and monitoring are a marker of the NPM discourses at play. In his discussion on performativity Ball (2003) draws upon Lyotard's law of contradiction leading to more time spent on tasks related to monitoring and collecting data in comparison to time spent on core tasks such as curriculum development, research or engagement with children.

Reforms involve cost and therefore arises the question of who shall pay for the reforms. Horn (2002) points out that the less influential individuals are the ones who absorb it;

reforms are altered such that the educators do more in the same time. The school timings for all the teachers differ as they teach different sections and grades. Not just their timings but how they spend their time also varies.

“I go home and plan, I don’t get time in the school. My work for my subject I have to do at home only”. (Miss A)

“In between the two sections when there is half an hour free, sometimes sir schedules meeting in that” (Miss D)

Other than teaching; time in school is spent on doing classroom observations, discussing next plan, figuring out logistics for training, maintaining data (Miss A), register work, making lesson plans or correcting books (Miss B), checking homework, planning and data maintenance (Miss E).

The work of the teachers therefore extends well beyond the teaching time encroaching in their personal lives. All the teachers discuss of taking work of different nature that they take home. Largely this includes planning and work related to data collection. The school timings offer little space for teachers to complete this work. Free time that could provide a space for teachers to rejuvenate is also missed due to these expectations. The teachers thus spend increasing amounts of time on planning, data collection and maintenance.

“Depending on the test and the enrollment the time varies 2.5 hours to 2-3 days. Weekly assessments are short and take 1-1.5 hours” (Miss B)

This is similar to Sachs & Blackmore (1998) work where they cite change as being a constant feature of educational systems and organizations that are impacting the nature and scope of the work of administrators and teachers. With increased external pressures to be more efficient, effective and economic combined with internal and external accountability the split between personal and professional lives of education workers has become blurred. This personal cost means that there is considerable emotional investment by administrators and teachers.

By redefining teachers work only in terms of skills and teaching as a method it has ignored the personal cost that teachers pay. These findings uncover the emotional and

personal investment that teachers make. These practices not only control how teachers define themselves and their work therefore controlling what emotions are displayed.

“Confronted on a daily basis with a variety of emotions—anger, bewilderment, anxiety, etc.— teachers control emotions of anger, anxiety, and vulnerability and express empathy, calmness, and kindness. In the act of controlling emotions, through the obligation to produce verbal and nonverbal expressions that are true to these rules, through the self-examination that precedes and accompanies emotional expressions, teachers become subjects for themselves” (Zembylas, 2004)

Measurement of learning is looked as a tracking tool towards the larger vision for the students. It is a way to define the current steps towards the vision, to keep a check on the outcomes in order to improve them.

“It is very important, not in the terms of like to, give judgment about the child, but to know like, if you have a vision, like a student vision, like the student, when they are going out of school that they should be doing, as I said, these are the different things that they should be doing, they should be having these values, they should be having this kind of mindset, they should be having this literacy and numeracy skills they should be knowing what they want to do in life, like at least having an idea of it. So if you're talking about this student vision, like so, obviously, like, unless we measure this vision, like our actions will not be maybe that well defined. And if we don't keep a check on, like, what the outcomes are, then I think we there will be very low chance of improving or like changing things if things are not going well. So it's very important, to assess learning” (Founder)

With teaching one particular objective and enabling the child to master is an exercise in vain if it only leads to an increased percentage or an improved level. The question that needs to be asked here is ‘for what’. Precision in terms of numbers can be restrictive by inhibiting alternative modes of understanding (Hardy, 2019) and also controlling allows for breaking down of curriculum which can be standardized and therefore can be better controlled and monitored (Au, 2019).

“Exams are important; I am not saying exams should not be there. No matter how much we say that our intention is purely to gain knowledge there is no selfish intention, but today’s children are not like that, if exams are not there they will be carefree. At least because of exams they will pay attention in the class or do self-study. There is no alternative other than exams. It is only on the results of these exams you know the quality and then admissions are done like for medicals, engineering which field one goes into. Therefore, exams are important” (Miss D)

The belief in measuring learning therefore emerges from the need to keep a check, track the progress and create a certain kind of student that is envisioned by the set goals. The reliance on assessments also lies in its pervasive presence in the educational system over the years. Measurement of learning is therefore about creating and monitoring the creation and sustenance of a certain kind of a teacher and a student.

Learning in the school is measured thrice a year in terms of literacy and numeracy through standardized assessments along with an intra-school competition for the life skills. Various other organizations like Adhyayan, TFI and Dream-a-Dream are collaborated with for planning and implementing these. Apart from these there are internal exams – the unit and the semester and also weekly and monthly assessments.

“Purpose of the monthly assessment, is to check like whether they need to repeat or like, do some remediation of whatever they taught in that particular month. For beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), end of the year (EOY) it is for checking the impact, like basically seeing where the students are in terms of the literacy and numeracy levels”. (Founder)

“The things we are teaching everyday are the children understanding or they are just filling books, to see how much attention they are paying or the planning the teacher had done, how successful it was to check that base we take tests and then we come to know how the children have understood”. (Miss E)

The need to conduct so many assessments is expressed differently by the teachers though mainly it is about knowing the level of the students. However, it is also,

“to show the parents in the open house how their kids are doing”. (Miss B)

Assessments have become the ultimate proofs of children’s growth and also as techniques to get them to study and be prepared. These assessments seem to have become an integral part of the teachers work and they feel the need to conduct almost all of them. If they had the choice, a few may let go off the in-school unit and semester assessments for which they prepare the papers but the others have carved their space as important and much needed. There also seems to be a dichotomy between the two kinds of tests taken one for knowing the level and second to track them in terms of syllabus. Given the focus on skills the latter seems to be pushed back.

However, the participants recognize the limitations of data being able to capture the complete reality of classrooms.

Three out of five teachers identify copying as a limitation of assessments. With online assessments they are worried about parents tampering the student responses. Miss D points to reasons such as students may not have read, or may have been absent or not paying attention as to why assessments do not show complete progress.

“Numbers only show what the children have written in the papers, what is the understanding. It doesn’t show the skills the children have, their behavior, what is the benefit of going to school. Numbers only show the passing marks doesn’t show how he is has got it” (Miss E)

However, at various instances teachers have appreciated the principal’s efforts to de-emphasize numbers and focus on skills. Though there may be an effort to render numbers less valuable, their pervasive presence cannot be ignored. The messaging around numbers is that they do not matter; however, they have still become a powerful measure of teachers’ efforts and students’ success.

The teacher’s dependence on these assessments and data is clearly visible. Their unquestioned acceptance; and treating it as the sole marker of progress is also evident. Though the founder realizes the limitations there is no going away from it. The normalized data management practices have created pro-active teachers that willingly

take more assessments in the hope to gauge their efforts and self-improve. This self-responsibilization and self-governance is distinctly neoliberal.

The organization cannot be completely blamed for the increase in the data collection practices though all the teachers agree to the increase since the introduction of the organization in the school as even the school has data collection as one of its goals. The effect therefore is mutual – the school management and the organization together have endorsed such practices.

The teachers do not just collect this data but also present it to the principal and the founder. The presentation of this data is a personal-emotional affair.

“If the data is good, then we feel happy otherwise we don’t feel good the students didn’t score as expected” (Miss B)

“...I can present my work of one year in the presentation and show all the teachers that in one year what all I have done, my children are at what level from zero.” (Miss C)

The presentations as perceived by the teachers are necessary to know how much work of the teachers has been successful and if the efforts are in right direction (Miss D), show to the other teachers how much the class has grown (Miss B) for the management to monitor the progress (Miss E).

“The management is dependent on us as to how we are handling their children. Through the presentation they see what the level of the child is. They don’t have time every day and they can’t check the result of individual children so through presentation they see the level of the school, what is the improvement. So it is to show to them the efforts of the teacher on children and what is the result of that. They can’t go in the class to observe, so then videos are also added, through which they understand what is happening in the class based on which this result has come. So this data is to show them what the teachers are doing with the children, how they are teaching, what is growth of the children their level”. (Miss E)

These data collection practices have subsumed under the list of duties that a teacher should perform. The presentations as seen from the teachers perspectives therefore act as a surveillance mechanism putting the onus on the teachers, making a rather linear connection between what students achieve and what efforts teachers put in. This linearity ignores the social reality in which the whole process takes place projecting a skewed picture of the issue.

Data collection and data presentation have become tools to know the students and teachers both. They have become the markers of good teachers whose efforts are visible in the improved outcomes and in class averages. Research conducted by Hardy (2019) reveals that teachers' work to improve learning is influenced by numeric indicators and targets as "proxy measures of student and teacher 'success', or otherwise". Though these tests are low-stake in nature, they have the same effect as high-stake assessments. These too have led to increased pressure, fear and anxiety among teachers. Such practices work as surveillance and monitoring tools for the management. They are the new forms of control. As the authorities try not to emphasize numbers or to blame the teacher for the low scores or non-performance, they have these very numbers do the job for them. These numbers not just govern the teachers' efforts but also influence her own understanding of herself as a teacher. Though the authorities may not promote competition between teachers or the presentations may be seen as opportunities for teachers to improve their presentation skills, this very practice of presenting data has an underlying effect of competition, the need to show to the other teachers the effect of their efforts. It then is about managing one's impression and image. It is essentially about the struggle of the factors that come to define one's identity.

"In the context of the neoliberal education model, teacher judgment, teacher interest, the teacher's relationship to the student's needs, are all sublimated in the quest for deliverable data points or outputs that can be easily quantified and given value in market terms" (Attick, 2017).

To fill in the gaps of quantitative data, the founder confides in the practice of classroom observation. However, though explicitly portrayed as a naïve exercise to understand

teacher-learning they are in fact ‘normalizing technologies’ that advocate particular definitions of teachers and teaching.

Classroom observations are important to the founder because they help look at the process rather than just the outcome, looking at how the teacher is acting on her feet, how she is reacting if things are not going according to the plan, what efforts is she making to reach the outcome. Teachers are observed at least twice and these observations follow a process and documentation procedures though there is no rating or rubric. Though all teachers respond positively in favor of these observations, feelings of nervousness, the ability to show their best and make no mistake still persist.

“They observe how my behavior in the class was. How was my personality? And all. Am I focusing on each and every student? Are students answering? How was my way of communication? They note down everything. How am I teaching? How am I using the blackboard? Is there eye contact that I'm listening to students; are students giving chorus answers, they observe each and everything related to classroom; related to display”. (Miss C)

“All teachers are dedicated only but some of them take it easily, just sit and scan mobile, if observation is there then they will be alert. Therefore class observations should be there.” (Miss A)

The practice of classroom observations can be easily disguised as looking at processes, helping the teacher, opportunities for improvement and being non-judgmental. However, the reality is quite different. These observations provide opportunities for minute surveillance.

Even though the empirical data here suggests that the founder claims to look at the processes than the product, there is still an attachment to learning outcome. It is therefore, looking at if the teacher is on track as per the plan to achieve the outcome, how she is adapting to ensure achievement. The focus then is still not on meaningful and authentic teaching but on finding strategies and best practices that enable achieving the pre-set objectives.

The definition of authenticity in teaching is subjective. Kreber et al. (2007) through their review of literature identify certain features and attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding as to what authenticity in teaching might entail. Some of these features include “consistency between values and actions”, “presentation of a genuine self as a teacher”, “care for students”, “care for what one’s life as a teacher is to be”, “self-knowledge and confronting the truth about oneself”, “being defined by oneself rather than by others’ expectations”, “critically reflecting how certain norms and practices have come about”, “reflecting on purposes”. Authenticity therefore, “needs to be sought in relation to issues that matter crucially” and involves exploring “the horizons of significance within which we define ourselves as educators and make decisions concerning the education of others”. They conclude that authenticity is not purely a cognitive process but involves attending to questions like “is this what education in the end is all about”.

By merely focusing on the objective and the outcome and tracking student and teacher movements to it during the observations, the whole exercise becomes less insightful. These findings of performing well in observations and the need to produce results are similar to those mentioned by Berry (2016) in his book.

An important point that this discussion raises is about the identity of the teachers and the role of power. There are certain broad ideas that may guide teachers’ understanding of being a teacher, however, each teacher does not implement these ideas in the same way neither do individual teachers perform being a teacher in the same way at all times. That is to say teachers merely do not perform their professional identities, they are performative. The fact that teachers alter their way of teaching and being in the class in the presence of an observer is a proof that such practices are implicated in power. Thus, classroom observations become what Foucault calls, ‘normalizing technologies’ that regulate behavior (Hurst & Smith, 2020).

The feelings of anxiety and nervousness attached with the exercise of classroom observations is the proof that it is not what it portrays, and the consequences might be of serious nature. When I use the term serious here it does not mean firing the teacher or any consequence in that direction, instead serious would mean questioning one’s ability to

teach. There is indeed an implicit definition of teacher and teaching that the observation upholds. And therefore, the teacher constantly compares herself to these understandings and definition questioning her ideas and methods not just questioning in the reflective, contemplative sense, but questioning if they are right or wrong. There is no harm to question one's own practice but it matters against what values and ideals is one questioning them. The question therefore is; is the definition of the teacher and teaching that the observation upholds ultimate and authentic? It also a question of authentic teacher professional development which is not recreating models of best practices but it is to develop teacher identities and teacher skills and knowledge in relation to their context (Mockler, 2013).

The Neoliberal Teacher

“Power is not a mode of subjugation, or a general system of domination and indeed power is as much about what can be said and thought as what can be done – it is discursive” (Ball, 2013). This chapter looks at how teachers come to understand their own identity and how they think of what is possible and what is not, therefore, it is in essence about power.

“For the neoliberal, ends-oriented, quasi-market model of education to be maintained, teachers must be governable subjects; they must become self-entrepreneurs with pre-determined externally-imposed quotas for the outputs that they are expected to produce” (Attick, 2017). This is exactly what is reflected in the study as well.

The skill to communicate, to know the learner, patience and an awareness of the power that she has to bring in change not only at the personal level of the student but eventually to the nation are expressed by the teachers as the skills, attitudes and mindsets required to become a teacher.

“It is not like a 6 hour job to earn but a teacher is a nation builder even doctors and engineers are created by teachers, it is a noble profession.” (Miss B)

Values and mindsets like friendly nature, patience; listening and communication skills – understanding students’ opinion (Miss B), kindness and fairness (Miss C), patience (Miss D & Miss E) are listed by the teachers that a teacher requires. Their descriptions hardly talk about the pedagogic skills rather they emphasize on the values and emotional aspects of the process – understanding the effects of their actions on how the learner may feel.

Harris (2002) also notes in her study that heads of schools did not operate from a predominantly technical-rational position but had a high degree of emotional intelligence and were aware of the need to build positive relationships with students, teachers and parents. Purposive rationality and reasoned reflection are important to teaching but so is emotional engagement. There is no hierarchy in which the two are placed; rather there is a need for a balance between two. Hargreaves (1994) recognizes the involvement of

emotional investment, political awareness, moral purpose, adeptness and acuity in the description of good teaching. Emotions are central to any conversation on change and teaching-learning as “personally significant and meaningful teaching is fundamentally grounded in and derived from one’s emotional connection with the self and with the broader social and political world at school” (Zembylas, 2004).

However, the founder lists “problem solving, creativity, digital skills (as they need to work on excel), empathy, critical thinking, grit, pedagogical skills and content knowledge as some of the skills, attitudes and mindsets required to become a teacher. This list can be classified into life and career skills, learning and innovation, and technology skills. This categorization is the framework for 21st century learning given by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) (Patterson, 2015). Though this framework and the skills mentioned therein are for the students in this case we can see the impact it has in defining a teacher. Mehta et. al. (2019) argue that 21st century skills align mostly with “corporate ideology resulting in compliant and obedient workforce” where efficient people are rewarded in the system infused with neoliberal rhetoric. They also raise an important point on equity in the context of 21st century skills as these seem to reflect the ideas of the elite and the middle class.

“I think my idea of a good teacher is someone that could not only work on the foundational skills of a student like academically, but also develop the values and mindsets needed. We live in a world of today, like basically having the 21st century skills and value the responsibility and great respect for each other. Having that spirit of teamwork and collaboration, and also give children an opportunity to express like what they have learned, like apply what they have learned and be curious, ask questions. Yeah, so this is what ideal teacher would be and like have differentiated support for different learners who might have different learning styles” (Founder)

There are different meanings of a good teacher that are realized through a discussion on a good teacher.

“Everybody thinks differently. For students, a good teacher is the one who helps them, solves their doubts, checks homework, appreciates, and knows about individual student. As per management – teacher should have 100% attendance, be punctual, and finish work on time and not be careless and be ready for any work. According to me, how can I be a good teacher improving each student, when parents are paying money and putting the child in our hands and their life is in our hands, show them the right path or just pass time. We need to also understand parents’ expectations and management expectations. A good teacher is the one who keeps all three happy” (Miss E)

The participants do not see teaching as an easy job or suited for everyone. It is a job that requires a certain set of skills and values, an interest in teaching and a willingness to update oneself continuously. It is neither a job that pays well. The teacher therefore is a person who has to get a lot done with lesser pay, bearing the cost of all expectations.

The founder believes that teaching is a very difficult job and requires a lot of patience, skills, creativity and empathy. However, he thinks currently people from “privileged families or those who are good in terms of academics” don’t prefer to be a teacher. They would generally go in for another profession, a high paying one. The reasons why people usually prefer teaching jobs is because they consider it as a less stressful, 5-6 hours of work with no night shifts instead of viewing it as “building the nation builder” he states.

“Everything a teacher has to see, how to teach, does the child know, what is the outcome, how to improve the weak, making question papers is also difficult. But if you enjoy this life, and want to stay in this field then you can enjoy otherwise it will be hard”. (Miss E)

The influence of 21st century skills and the second order tasks is seen in the way teachers and the founder describe their ideas of a good teacher. Critically questioning the practices and asking reasons for their introduction and critically debating those are not to be found. The 21st century skills debate emerging from the neoliberalist perspective has come to redefine the teacher. The power of these reforms is therefore not just visible control but operates covertly changing the meanings. The teachers’ own framing of their tasks, skills

and focus on teaching reflect the various aspects and values of the neoliberal discourse. By redefining what you are and what you do, the neoliberal discourse has taken control of the teachers.

Though being a teacher isn't an easy job as perceived by the participants it is highly influenced by the discourses of performativity and 21st century skills. These discourses have led to an increase in the time teachers' spend on practices that emerge from them like data collection and maintenance. Teachers have readily accepted this as their duty given the objective reality it shows.

“We are not tired that we have to do extra work. Half an hour doesn't matter for teachers”. (Miss C)

“Management doesn't tell that you have to take exams this month, but I take it by myself only, because the more exams and tests happen the more I will know about their mistakes and the growth will be quick. So I take reading and writing test in every class, every week” (Miss E)

Though there is no evident pressure or blame on the teacher from the authorities the teacher herself takes the blame and suggests self-improvement. This is a clear example of individualism, where institutional and social factors are ignored and the success and failure is attributed to the individual's effort.

“It feels that our impression is also becoming down. Data of other classes is good. We have done some efforts less, that's why our data has gone down, and next time we will try to improve it”. (Miss A)

The self-responsibility to collect data while being self-motivated is reflected by the founder when he shares that teachers now see the motive behind these and not just as a job to be completed as before so that they see value in it as something which will help them get more output and reach more outcomes.

The focus on individual effort percolates this aspect as well. With the teachers trying to know where they lack, what they can improve, where have their efforts fallen short brings back the spotlight on the individual effort. Failure to achieve therefore naturally becomes

associated with the teacher's effort. The circumstances in which she works often disappear in the conversation; it is a straightforward linear equation of teacher efforts leading to student outcomes. "The degree to which a teacher can successfully produce those externally-imposed outcomes becomes a measure of the teacher's value in the market" (Attick, 2017) and thus the dangers of such linearity cannot be further emphasized.

Most of the teachers agree that the responsibility of ensuring quality education lies on the teacher whereas Miss B and Miss C also locate this responsibility with the students.

"So that is something in which that we have given the independence to the teacher like, there has to be at least once in a month, like that, they have to give us some data and like, once in one month, they have to, like, take an assessment to check the learning levels. So either they do it at the end of the chapter or they do it at the end of two chapters, but then one sort of a monthly test sort of that the teachers have to take, they can more also". (Founder on weekly/monthly assessments)

However, the founder agrees that in the current scenario teacher are not given a lot of freedom like writing outcomes but then there is freedom to experiment within the given boundaries wherein the teachers can do a lot to drive student outcomes, be creative and have new structures. These boundaries he defines are the learning outcomes that are evaluated, making lesson plans, having assessment, having parent teacher meetings; and then again he emphasis that the teachers are free to be creative within these.

I am not sure if one could call this freedom or to be resourceful and efficient given the current limitations. The final product pre-defined with the limited resources available it is not the freedom that the teachers enjoy but task of being productive and efficient. These conditions reflect the vocabulary of neoliberalism and NPM.

Bartell et. al. (2019) draw upon Bandura and his colleagues' work on agency; explaining agency as a tripartite construct which includes "an individual's recognition of a significant challenge, the development of a strategy to address that challenge, and the implementation of that strategy". Given this understanding of agency, the teachers seem to have no agency.

Yet, all the teachers express that it is in their capacity to decide on what to test to a certain extent. The limits of this power though not expressed explicitly still get reflected. The dates are given by the management, the level papers are externally set, monthly data is mandatory, the teachers can do more tests if they want, the teachers can set their own papers for the in-house tests but there are matters outside the decision making power of the teachers and these are often conveyed in a manner that makes it sound urgent and important.

When asked why there is a need for external papers, the founder clarifies that,

“I think it's not about the external papers, we could have done it internally also, we wanted a skill based paper and also, some help with the analysis...that will give a very extensive understanding of where students are struggling and what is the next what can be the next step for us in terms of even getting as simple as getting a learning outcome with what is to be taught if the child has to move from a particular level to the next level or have to get a mastery of the particular level? Or where is the child struggling? Is it the knowledge based questions? Is it the skill based question so that kind of ... doesn't happen with the internal people the teachers are not well trained to design assessments like that”. (Founder)

This gap in the teachers not being trained enough is also reflected when teachers express their doubt over how competent they feel to take decisions.

“I cannot say I am very confident or the things I am doing are very good. When the results come, the outcomes come that time you can judge that I have done it correctly”. (Miss B)

The reliance on assessment data to gauge one's capability and self-worth is concerning. It not only shows the level to which data collection practices are internalized but also how they have come to define the worth of the teacher in her own eyes.

When asked about why the founder thinks the kind of support that is provided to the teachers is the one they need the founder clarifies that,

“I think it's not like that. I think it's more of like, given the children at the center like whatever; what do we need to do for the children and for that, whatever is required” (Founder)

Teachers are merely looked as a means to an end. This kind of attitude devalues the teachers as individuals making meaningful contribution. I am not against child-centered education but looking at teachers merely to get good outcomes is dangerous as it makes them replaceable, and given the progress of technology this is not far from reality. Therefore, it is important to treat teachers as individuals, individuals that matter and not just ways to achieve something. Their positioning as means invisibilizes their struggle and robs them of their intellectual power. This standpoint neglects the personal and emotional investment teachers make, for they only remain important as long as they are efficient enough, productive enough in the eyes of the other to achieve a pre-determined aim set by the other.

The linearity of teacher efforts leading to student outcomes and treating teachers as means may blur their emotional struggle. This one-sided view of teachers may increase the ideas that the teachers are exposed to but it may in reality lead to the implementation of the best practices and compliance to even more norms and processes.

Giroux (2010) argues that educational reforms that ignore and neglect politics, critical thinking, power and creativity essentially convey that the values that matter are “individual acquisition, unchecked materialism, economic growth and a winner-take-all mentality”. This he believes harms the preparation of the youth for a democratic future.

Most of the support that the organization seems to provide is in terms of ideas either in the form of activities or training at times supporting with worksheets and other materials. However, there seems to be not much emphasis on providing actual teaching aids or material resources those may just as well be prepared by the teachers.

“Whatever is normal we are already doing that on top of that this is extra burden. Then at that time we feel stress, but once it's over then we feel better” (Miss E)

“If we improve then its okay if not then they will pressurize us to reinforce the things on the students again and again. If we are on right track then the pressure will not come”. (Miss A)

“There is so much workload and so much pressure, I sometimes feel sad” (Miss C)

“It is like a daily wage worker, if you work only then that day’s salary” (Miss D on the issue of leaves)

Yet, these teachers seem grateful for their appointment and seem alright with the one third salaries on which they are working for now and express a certain level of job security.

“I don’t know much about it. If management has told them (teachers not currently working) or they have decided not to come, or management can’t afford or they can’t afford the salary management paying. Maybe it’s not feasible for them to work with 1/3rd pay”. (Miss D)

“I have seen here that there are teachers who have been here 10-15 years, and can continue here till they want, so in a way their job is secure”. (Miss E)

“It’s a little burden; again and again we have to do this assessment and all, paper correction. But it is good for the students and at the end of the year the outcomes and the results are better” (Miss B)

And the cut in the salary has not translated to less amount of work.

“It’s been more in fact because they had to learn new techniques on how to teach online and how to and even tracking children was difficult like they call children up and ask them to come to the class and provide attendance and that too in a excel sheet not like on a paper” (Founder)

Though the teachers do not fear being asked to leave, the stress and pressures of work cannot be ignored. There may be various reasons for which the teachers may have or may have not agreed to work for the reduced salary, the pressure to make such a decision is

tremendous. Teachers have time and again showed their commitment to work and have also highlighted the struggle between their personal life and school. Teaching and teachers therefore cannot be viewed as means to better outcomes, the linear equation of teacher efforts to student outcomes therefore is skewed. There is as it shows a lot of personal and emotional investment of the teacher. The role of their emotions in staying or leaving, resisting or complying cannot be ignored. However, the NPM strategies, the accountability systems and the quantification of teaching-learning have obscured emotions.

The teacher feels and considers herself as solely responsible for ensuring quality education for the children and for this has internalized the practices of performativity. Though she feels the pressure and stress she still has taken on the increased workload even settling for lesser pay and juggling the identities of a manager, a teacher and a colleague, prioritizing others over self.

“The ground of such struggles is often highly personal. Expressed in the lexicons of belief and commitment, service and even love, and of mental health and emotional well-being. The struggles are often internalized and set the care of the self against duty to others” (Ball, 2003).

This resilience has come to fit quite well with the neoliberal discourse. The value of resilience in fact is quite supportive of the discourse. Joseph (2013) demonstrates the fit between resilience and the neoliberal discourse. Resilience he argues contributes to neoliberalism “through its stress on heightened self-awareness, reflexivity and responsibility”.

Thus at the end we have a neoliberal teacher, an entrepreneur, self-responsibilized, self-governable yet allowing to be governed by the practices of NPM, relying on data as a marker of success for herself and her students. This neoliberal teacher Attick (2017) calls a modern homo-economicus.

Using technology, presentations, taking assessments and filling data which wasn't there before (Miss A) along with the shift from the focus on syllabus to focusing now on basic

skills (Miss B) mark the teachers' own shift in the understanding of the work of a teacher and is an evidence of the influence of the neoliberal forces.

“Sometimes when I think teachers are blaming us, that due to you all only we get this work, why do you bring up new work then we feel like we are stressing teachers. Management is forcing us to do, like all this work should get done by the teachers and on the other side teachers feel tired and have to do this work, so feel like we are giving them stress and so it's not good. Sometimes I feel bad for them also.” (Miss A also a coordinator)

Partiality Miss E explains, is in the sense, when people who prepare the timetable allot fewer lectures for themselves and are free otherwise but still claim to be fully packed. This upsets her; this is like ignoring other person's hard work she says.

“Sometimes teachers think that, that she is an academic coordinator, supervisor so she is acting too much. We have to follow instructions according to the management if they have said to make the teachers do like this, then we have to force them to do. If they are coming on 10-2 and we are calling them one hour before, I have to make them understand, come; we have work. So they are telling me that make sir understand that every time it is not possible like this. So sometimes we face problem”. (Miss A also a coordinator)

It is these “managers” who have to juggle between the management and teachers and bear the brunt from both ends. It is obvious that they may struggle between the two parties and any mis-implementation of a decision may boil down to their inability to handle teachers. There is a dual identity that they need to maintain. The introduction of this line of managers who supervise and monitor the teachers to ensure “quality” work is essentially borrowed from the practice of new public management.

This also resembles Taylorism at work. Taylorism can be described as efficient production that relies on managers who gather all information related to work, that they oversee then analyze using scientific methods to identify ways for the workers to complete their tasks in an orderly and efficient way (Noble, 1977 as referred in Au, 2011). And in the context of school it is the process where teachers use efficient methods

to get students to achieve pre-set objectives and the administrators determine which are the most efficient ways. Thus, the school becomes the factory, the students the raw materials, administrators become managers and teachers are the workers (Au, 2011).

“Lot of fancy things random things do happen and technology is pushed to the teacher like they have to take audio visual classes, they have to, like maybe, I mean, do activities, which may not be related to what the teacher is trying to do”.
(Founder)

The founder recognizes that recently there have been a lot of schools that have come up in the community and there is a competitive factor attached to it in terms of which is doing better also as schools charge fees and add to what is the USP.

“The teachers have been handed over books or lesson plans, sometimes from external vendors and all who have come and given and it's a very mechanical job with the teachers are doing, a lot of tracking is happening. Because these vendors want the content to be delivered as they want the workbooks to be filled”
(Founder)

New vendors come in with worksheets and workbooks giving discounts which then become a new feature that draws a number of parents. As a result the teachers get overburdened with random things that get pushed onto the teacher instead of asking what they want, he explains. The tracking that is required in such scenarios also creates pressure. This is not innovation he says; instead it is the implementation of someone else's innovation without asking if they want this to happen or is there an actual need for this.

This highlights the marketized environment in the context of schools.

“Not only do schools seek contacts with business, but business now comes into the school” (Hirtt, 2009).

The founder locates the source of pressure to innovate and improve on a model of reform that is evidently neoliberal in nature, transforming and treating schools as markets whereas the teachers as seen earlier feel the pressure not necessarily to innovate but of a

generic nature in the very nature of the tasks they have to perform under the founder's own reform initiative. The covertness with which the discourses of NPM and performativity operate is missed even by founder.

The all-pervasive presence of neoliberalism in fact has become its power of penetration (d'Agnese, 2019).

“If all the teachers are agreeing and only I am disagreeing it would be wrong”
(Miss A)

“If you are objecting, you need to have the support of the other teachers as well, only then you go to the management and they follow it up not like they will make you do it because otherwise it will be like other teachers are doing it, why do you have a problem. And then you will become bad, that you don't want to work, so all teachers should agree and go together” (Miss E)

Discourse is a conjunction of power and knowledge. It produces truth through which power is exercised. Discourses reveal certain ideas and displace certain ideas and therefore, they empower some while disempowering others. Certain discourses may gain legitimacy through majority opinion making people believe that the public consent has been reached. However, in reality it masks social conflicts. When others can do it why not you? Is the question that the teachers' might have to answer not just to explain their view but also to prove their commitment to the job and their willingness to put in hardwork. This association of disagreement with the teacher's commitment to work is another hindrance in expressing resistance.

Performativity appeals to the scientific temperament therefore posing itself objective and neutral helping people to know reality in a precise way making resistance even more difficult.

“Not really, there was no data initially stored; right now at least numerical data is collected. Earlier teachers would just do their job, students would study and then exams, results would be given out nobody was actually bothered what teacher students are learning. Like a scientific way of measuring and analyzing it was not

there. So that way its good we have started somewhere are having this conversation on how can we improve it more, and what other attributes we can get in” (Founder)

Teaching and learning is largely driven by data-gathering and monitoring of students in the context of performance driven accountability (Neumann, 2019) and hence it can be difficult for teachers to think alternatives to data. However, in the study teachers do mention activities, presentations by students, competition among them (Miss A), observing students in class (Miss B) or asking them to explain (Miss E) as alternate methods to understand if students have learned. In spite of this the teachers feel that the schools and teachers themselves agree to engage in more data collection practices because of the accurate information the numbers provide (Miss D) or because it is a formal requirement (Miss C) or even just to show (Miss E).

“Because the management has to show. For example, the highest scorer of the 10th grade, there is a banner everywhere, it’s like advertising. If there is no data, how will you show it? This is a way of advertising to show the attractive things, that in our school studies are happening properly, conducting exams every month so then parents also think that yes, studies happen here deeply. It’s for show off or to bring seriousness among parents and children to bring that thing that studying is important because every month there is a test, so then data that gets created, the management will show it ahead that in this way such activities happen in our school, how is the growth in the school.” (Miss E)

“The testing regime, performance-based accountability measures, and the economics-based vision of education operate together effectively, reinforcing one another and thus creating a kind of closed loop that renders inconsistent and unfeasible the ability to consider alternatives” (d’Agnese, 2019).

According to Winch (2002) autonomy in an educational context has three aspects, firstly the choice not just of means but also of ends, secondly the knowledge to make a choice about the ends and third the mastery to pursue projects even in time of difficulties. Self-chosen ends are therefore a key feature of autonomy. What is seen from the responses of

the founder and the teachers who are partly in favor of ready-made lesson plans is the autonomy of choice in terms of means and not the ends. This inclination towards regulated autonomy emerging from the discussion with the participants is part of the increased shift from licensed autonomy to regulated autonomy argued by Apple (2006).

“Readymade lessons are also good but that doesn’t mostly fit. Every teacher’s view about teaching is different, if they give only basic concept that is enough. Sometimes they put a lot of things into one plan, deep concept which is not required for that level. Then the teachers find it difficult”. (Miss A)

“This is not helpful for us, how will we come to know, we will just pick up the book and say this is the LP and teach that, but the one created by the teachers is helpful for teachers and students. Because someone else has made it, the teacher has not been involved in it or should I just rote learn the LP and teach it in 40 minutes. My involvement is not there then what is the point of me being a teacher”. (Miss C)

In the organizational form of professionalism Lundström (2015) argues that professionals are “expected to be competent, self-disciplined deliverers of public services” unlike occupational professionalism which involves control of work, trust and professional ethics. A ready-made lesson plan would provide for the opportunity for tracking teacher’s work more closely, seeing what goes on into the classroom. Even if teachers do have the freedom to tweak the plan, their work can be scrutinized against the aforementioned outcomes in the given plans. Such plans therefore provide the teachers regulated autonomy instead of licensed autonomy where the teachers once professionally certified are free to act according to their judgment in the class though within limits. Autonomy is therefore also linked to trust. Thus, the shift towards regulated autonomy also raises the question of trusting teachers and their professional knowledge.

The youngest and also the newest teacher seems to be a lot in favor for these plans as compared to the experienced ones. This inclination to the idea of packaged lesson plan which is neoliberal in nature may originate from the teacher’s own experience and recent training in the performative systems. According to Wilkins et al., (2020) the

performative systems have matured and there are hardly any teachers without any pre-performative experience. Given the age and experience of Miss E it is highly likely that this may be one of the causes of her positive outlook towards the ready-made lesson plans.

The one instance of strong resistance to such practices that we come across is when the teacher questions the practice in terms of how it transforms her identity, the purpose of her being. Therefore, it is important for teachers to question these practices more critically and on crucial matters of purpose and identity only then shall they see the fault lines.

For teachers to resist they need to see the attacks on their professional autonomy as part of the attack on the concepts of social provision and one needs to realize that the current systems of control and measurement originates from a certain ideological position (Berry, 2016).

For teachers to be able to resist or challenge these reforms we need to look into the teacher education programme they have undergone. What are the foundations of the teacher identity that were laid then, are we training them or are we educating them? Resistance, in this vicious cycle of data, individual achievement, self-improvement is difficult. Can teachers resist such practices is a valid concern but a much more worrying question that this whole study raises is do we trust our teachers?

If given the choice to opt out all teachers would still continue to attend the trainings though one of them expressed her inhibitions about it initially.

“In the beginning I would feel bored. I am telling my feelings. We have done this in D.Ed. very deeply, so then I would think why do we need to do this, what is new in this, we have already done this” (Miss E)

They see it as learning opportunities, without questioning what kind of learning. However, it is clear that the teachers feel the need to adapt to the changing situations which is a driving force behind their compliance. Left out from the purview of trainings offered by the state, this seems a good enough opportunity to understand new things.

Thus, when seen as ways to keep one-self updated and feel belonged and part of the changes, there is no objection to what is happening.

“I would love to participate. You should learn whatever you are getting. You should participate and also learn. Things are changing again and again and you should be a part of it” (Miss B)

“For teachers who are in municipality, ZP schools or government schools for them the training is provided from the top. We need training like this only then we will understand the new things”. (Miss D)

Resistance can be understood through the concept of fabrications.

“If they know that the observation is to happen, like they will become more prepared, and that would be an opportunity for them to present like how good they can teach and whatever they have been able to bring into like” (Founder)

There is a certain level of preparedness that the teacher undertakes for these observations. Her plan and actions are guided by the observer and the observer’s expectations. To what extent then these observations provide a real picture of the class is questionable. Drawing upon Ball’s conception of ‘fabrication’ that is a performance that is solely created as it is being seen and evaluated; Taylor Webb et. al. (2009) argue that such fabrications are strategies that teachers resort to regain their practice from the “coercive effects of neoliberal surveillance”.

The ubiquity with which these discourses work, their simplistic quick fix solutions to complex problems, objectifying almost all aspects of education, using language to misrepresent improved choice and freedom and portraying data as an ultimate measure of success bestow these discourses with the power to penetrate even in areas that cannot be commodified. Their power lies not in hierarchical modes of control but operates through ideas and practices that seem innocent initially, but only when one examines how they operate and what they lead to together and how they form a part of the larger global pattern to maintain certain worldviews is when one realizes their control.

Conclusion

This research is an attempt to understand the micro-politics of reforms, keeping teachers at the centre of the discourse and analysis. This is so because teachers bear the responsibility of implementation, yet are seldom involved in its design or macro-architecture. By analyzing the reform design and implementation along with exploring the background of the participants (mostly teachers), their understanding of aims of education, conceptualizations of good teacher and effective teaching, discussing data collection practices and their visions of alternatives to such practices, the study establishes the political nature of reforms, showing that power operates through fabrication of meanings individuals derive from various practices and how they come to form and understand their own identity. The tools of NPM that are used to design reforms, and the practices of performativity entailed by such reform prescriptions, emerge from the neoliberal perspective--they are ways in which teachers are directed to perform. Not only is there a ubiquitous, common-sense, strait-jacketed, and a somewhat quick fix nature to these prescriptions of reforms, but they also begin to assume a role in defining teacher's identity and their commitment to work. This renders any resistance to reform practices difficult. As my research shows, resistance can emerge only when teachers question the practice in terms of how it transforms their identity and the purpose of their being.

The use of the single, in-depth case study has provided an opportunity to discuss various themes at length. It has enabled a comprehensive approach towards discussing the different themes that emerge from the review of literature, but more importantly build on the robust empirical observations in a 'bottoms-up' approach. The field view is thus prioritized, and theory building happens in a 'ground up' approach. What this study has managed to do successfully is to understand how power operates through the web of practices like data collection and presentation, classroom observations, conceptualizations of aims of education by practitioners themselves, and an understanding of effective teaching and teachers. By engaging in these complex, subjective interrelated ideas it has brought out the hidden aspects of power and control. Locating the discussion in the global scheme of things has helped move the study beyond

the single case to a broader significance raising critical questions about the unquestioned popular practices.

The reform manages to fulfill the main expectations of the teachers to remain updated with the changes, adapting to the dynamic situations, and providing opportunities to learn something new. Therefore, it earns support from the teachers. Secondly, a large part of the intervention is focused on teachers, this can be looked at in two ways – one, teachers are important, they are the ones who can bring about change and therefore placing them on a high pedestal and two, teachers do not do their work and therefore they need to change. It is obvious from the discussions that there is no instance of blaming so it is the former scenario that gets highlighted. Thus, by ensuring teachers enjoy a revered position at the same time feel up to date with the changes works in the favor of the reform intervention thereby gaining the support of the teachers.

The value of individualism that is prioritized in the context of these reforms associates failure with individual effort and therefore individuals fail to see any flaws with the whole approach. The focus on the individual offers a piece-meal approach making it difficult to see the different parts working together rendering resistance to the entire project difficult. There is a noticeable tension between competition and collective voices. Resistance as can be seen from the study requires the teachers to put forth a collective voice whereas the other practices like data collection and presentation are rather individualistic relating to individual failure or success. Competition based on individualistic practices vs collective voice is a hard duel.

There are systemic issues that prevent resistance by preventing alternate imaginations and solutions. Examinations form an integral part of the education system. Access to opportunities of higher learning are based on these numbers, an entire shadow education industry thrives on people's aspirations for these numbers. It is therefore not easy to overthrow such a deep rooted mechanism that is tied with both the aspirations and opportunities for better future and a profit oriented market of such services. Secondly, the low-fee paying schools such as the one under study have to manage shortage of funds which lays favorable working grounds for organizations like this which promise to 'save

the school from failure'. Hiring teachers for lower wages with or without proper training and certification helps such schools to work on lower budgets but at the same time promote entry of such organizations that promise to upgrade the teachers and the learning levels either free of cost or at lower costs. The stratified system of schooling therefore creates favorable conditions to marketize schools. These market conditions then operate with logic of meritocracy, competition and individualism – laying the foundation of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism therefore in the context of schools becomes a savior. Who shall then question this hero who saved the day? Resistance therefore is indeed difficult against such a discourse that positions itself as an innocent savior.

By actively introducing organizations in the school, endorsing data collection and presentation practices, emphasizing skills the school has transformed itself into a breeding ground for neoliberal practices.

Adaptability is seen as one of the main purposes of education. The aims of education that the participants uphold speak of adaptability in one way or the other. The teachers themselves see adaptation to the changing situation as one of their expectations from the trainings they attend. Adaptability, in a way is compliance to the needs of the economic and political order. By making individuals learn new things, it provides them with an intrinsic satisfaction however; the things that they learn make them more obedient to the discourse. Critically questioning the existing structures and practices is not a component that gets addressed when adaptability is the aim.

The pre-defined objectives are also in a way seeking adaptability for they curb the ability to imagine a different world. It is the mastery of externally imposed objectives that is prioritized. Such adaptability that resorts to an externally imposed aim working top-down ignores the ground realities. It works towards achieving a pre-determined external aim without considering the resources and conditions on the ground.

Individualism and entrepreneurialism work together to sustain the discourse on meritocracy; thereby favoring neoliberalism.

Planning and monitoring occur repetitively as teachers talk about their work. Often their work extends beyond school timings encroaching upon their personal space. It is the data

management practices that occupy a large share of their time at school and at home. Such encroachment is often frustrating, however, as teachers have readily accepted such practices as their duty, the frustration is rarely expressed. These practices of performativity and NPM have been internalized to such an extent that they now control teachers' emotions and how they feel about the increased workload.

The work and working conditions have redefined the identity of teachers. How teachers understand their identity is being transformed by changing the parameters that have come to define a teacher. Assessment data has become a powerful marker of how teachers understand their own work. The reliance on numerical measures therefore highlights certain aspects of teachers' work as important and by doing so force the teachers to concentrate only on those aspects. Though the teachers in this study do not feel the need to teach to the test, they have still accepted these test scores as measure of success for their efforts, they still feel the need to show it to the other teachers and management through data presentations how successful their efforts were.

These data collection and presentation practices have become surveillance mechanisms not just for the school management but also for the teachers themselves. They have become 'self-governable' governable subjects.

Firstly, to understand power in the context of educational reforms is to understand the broader context in which they are initiated. The study locates the particular intervention as emerging from the neoliberal discourse associated with the practices of performativity and techniques of NPM. It cannot be looked at in isolation as just another intervention trying to improve schools but is rather located in the widespread global education reform movement. It is from here that the discrete power of the intervention originates.

Secondly, the pre-determined objectives that emerge from the behaviorist model attempt to make visible the process of teaching-learning by breaking down the process into smaller manageable units that can be monitored. Such breaking down in fact is a mode of control.

The idea of measuring learning through mastery of objectives and data collection or even the formulation of vision for students when understood within the context of GERM

(global education reform movement), prioritizes a certain individual with certain values. This envisioning of 'the student' is to control what kind of citizen is created by controlling how teachers' work.

Education and teachers have both become means to an end. Their own individual worth is lost as the ends have become more worthwhile. Neoliberalism has therefore re-positioned education not just as a means but by drastically changing the curriculum and pedagogy by focusing on skills and measurement producing labor required by the economic and political order. On the other hand, teachers have been made more docile and compliant by reducing them to technicians and undermining their intellectual ability. The power of such reforms is that together as a group they have managed the entire system to kowtow to the needs of neoliberalism.

The findings of the study highlight the need to relook at the meaning of professional development of teachers. When professional development is viewed as the formation of teacher identity, it moves beyond the technical-rational ideas of teachers' work that are embedded and defined in terms of quality standards (Mockler, 2013).

The professional development that the teachers in this study undergo seems to be restricted at development of skills, limiting itself to training, providing a simplistic view of the educational experience, whereas, in essence professional development is about development of teachers' identity. Mockler (2011) therefore suggests looking at teacher education as formation. That is to discard the technical rational approach of training through fast tracked programs and standards and to embrace the idea of teacher education as to develop an understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of their identity.

There is a need for professional development initiative which educates the teachers and not just trains them. There is a need for critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy argues Giroux (2010) recognizes that pedagogy is political as it is associated with the formation and acquisition of agency. It is therefore a matter of control; who controls the production of knowledge. It acknowledges and reveals the relationships among knowledge, authority and power; raising questions of control over curriculum and knowledge (Giroux, 2014).

Standards merely provide a simple answer to a complex question. There is a need to ask questions and engage in authentic conversations about the what, the how and why of teacher professional learning and to realize that there is no scalable quick fix (Mockler, 2013).

To problematize pedagogy educators need to critically question their own involvement in how and what they teach simultaneously resisting efforts to transform pedagogy into application of techniques and methods (Giroux, 2010).

Chandran (2020) suggests “incorporating a cultural political conception of pedagogy” in the models of accountability considering the political, cultural context and not just focusing on efficiency and control. She further argues for a space of agentic meaning making in the systems of accountability that is for the teachers to be able to create “a coherent narrative of their work” in order to achieve “meaningful pedagogic reform”.

Accountability is usually spoken of in terms of teachers; the need however is to have accountability for the other side as well.

Teachers in the context of critical pedagogy are public intellectuals having control over their conditions of labor (Giroux, 2014). The collective voice and spaces that encourage teachers to meaningfully participate and take control are therefore important. Teacher networks play an important role in “sustaining justice-oriented and activist teachers through the profession” (Bartell et. al., 2019).

The teachers of the 21st century constantly face dilemmas and questions of meaning they ascribe to their work and self (Marne, 2021). By uncovering the hidden role of power, this study has brought to light some of these dilemmas. It emphasizes the importance of critically questioning the ordinary and popular. By problematizing the well-intended intervention it has revealed the presence of the global discourse on neoliberalism. The study essentially warns both the reformer and the reformed to critically reflect on their actions identifying the knowledge and values that are prioritized and marginalized.

The various other themes that emerged during the discussions though important but beyond the scope of this study like the working of networks of NGOs and the power they

wield, gender and teaching, exclusion in the context of 21st century skills, reforms, schools and the reproduction of social inequalities, the neoliberal parent can advance our understanding of ways in which such power operates.

There never was a golden age of teaching and education and our efforts to glorify the past position of teachers and the teaching profession are often an engagement in false nostalgia (Berry, 2016). “Pedagogy is never innocent” (Giroux, 2010) and “power and ideology permeate all aspects of education” (Giroux, 2014).

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Appendix A: Introductory Call - Script

Hello everyone! Thank-you for joining in! The purpose of this call is to introduce you to the research I am doing, what it is about and what is expected of you. Before I talk about my research I would like to briefly introduce myself. I am Ruhi. I am currently an M.Phil. student at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and this research is a part of this program.

I have myself been a teacher for a brief period of time but I have had the chance to work closely with teachers and schools over the past few years. Teaching and learning processes have undergone a lot of change in the past years. There are newer ways of teaching and assessing that are being introduced and at the heart of all these reforms is the teacher. Introducing and implementing such reforms is quite a complex process. It not only affects the teaching but also the teacher as a person. Some reforms are successful while some are not. Teachers willingly support some while sometimes disagree yet have no choice but to implement them. Simply put, this complexity is the focus of my research that is, to know how teachers are being affected by introduction of these reforms, do they support these reforms or resist them, and what are their reasons to do so.

I primarily selected your school because it has been part of the transformation and empowerment program conducted by <organization name> of which teacher training is a major focus and this is also the reason why I decided to explore the work of <organization name>. Given teachers are central to this reform project, interacting with you all will help me understand and explore the impact of reforms from a teachers' perspective. I will also be having similar interactions with <founder's name>. A view from both the parties will give me a comprehensive picture of the issue.

Okay, coming to what you are going to do. After this call I will be sending out a reflection exercise to all of you. You need to write down your thoughts about the questions mentioned there. You will have two days to think, reflect and write. You can then click a picture of your written answers and send it to me on whatsapp. I request you all to write descriptive, detailed answers, there is no word limit. You can write in a language you prefer (English/Hindi/Marathi). After this I will schedule individual

interviews with each of you; for which I will reach out to each one of you separately to fix a time. There are three rounds of interviews. Each interview will last for about 30-45 minutes. The three interviews will be conducted on three separate days. An important point I would like to note here, is that, your identity will not be revealed, that is finally when I write out the thesis I shall not mention your name or your school's name or the organization's name, however I may use information such as the grades and subject you teach. The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed that is I will be converting the recorded audio to written text for analyzing them at a later stage.

So, I will just summarize the key points from today's call:

- This research is a part of my M.Phil. program.
- I am studying the ways in which reforms are affecting teachers, the way they are directing or controlling them and the reasons and ways in which teachers support or resist these reforms.
- As part of this research you are expected to complete a reflection exercise in two days in a language of your choice. Please write detailed-descriptive-long answers.
- There will be three rounds of interviews that will be recorded and transcribed.
- Your name or your school's name/organization's name shall not be revealed.

That's it from my side. You are now free to ask any questions you have. <Answer questions if any> Thank-you everyone for your time and I will send out the reflection exercise on your whatsapp numbers. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me. Thank-you!

Appendix B: Reflection Exercise

[Participants will be given two days to submit their responses]

Write down your thoughts about education (for founder & teachers)

- what is the purpose of education?
- what do you think is quality education
- role of education in a child's life?

Write down your thoughts about teaching (for founder & teachers)

- what are the skills/attitudes/mindsets required to become a teacher?
- how difficult or easy it is to learn to teach?
- what is effective teaching according to you?

Tell me a little about your teaching practice (for teachers only)

- describe a teaching day in your life?
- what are the different activities you do in a school week and how much time do you spend on each of them?
- how do you plan for the classes?

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Questions for Interview Round 1 [approx.45 min./participant]

Founder	Teachers
Part I – Context Setting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me a little about your organization like when did you start it, what was your idea behind it. • Why this focus on teachers? • Can you talk about the intervention your organization is having in this school <p><i>(what is it about, why this school, how has the response been from teachers)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think you have got the response you have from the teachers? • Can you elaborate on the activities and processes undertaken under this intervention? <p><i>(Ask for details on the purpose of each activity, what preceded and followed each activity, role of the teachers, principal, and the founder)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me a little about your self <p><i>(since when have you been teaching, how long have you been teaching in this school, why did you want to become a teacher, was this your first career choice, age)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you been involved in this intervention? What are the various activities? • Why do think this intervention was introduced in your school? • If you had the choice to opt out of the intervention, would you go for it? Why?
Part II – Views on education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What according to you is the purpose/aim of education? 	

- What is quality education according to you?
(What are the things that should be a part of quality education?)
- What is the role of education in a child's life?
- How do you know a child has learned something? For example you have taught a child a few new words or how to add, how do you know the child has understood it?
- How important is it to measure learning?
- How often do you measure learning?
- Sometimes we learn something for the intrinsic value it holds, how important is this aspect to education?

Part II – Views on teaching

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the skills/attitudes/mindsets required to become a teacher? • What is effective teaching according to you? • How difficult or easy it is to learn to teach? • Is teaching suited for all individuals; who do you think can teach? • With a little training, will someone be able to teach? Why do you think so? • Are there any resources you provide for teachers to plan/conduct classes? • Recently, as a way for supporting teachers, teachers are provided with | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a teaching day in your life? • What are the different activities you do in a school week and how much time do you spend on each of them? • How do you plan for the classes? • Are there any resources provided by the organization to you to plan/conduct classes? • Recently, as a way for supporting teachers, teachers are provided with ready-made lesson plans - what do you think about this move? • What is your focus when you teach? • What role do the learning outcomes/objectives play when you teach? |
|---|---|

<p>ready-made lesson plans - what do you think about this move?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role do the learning outcomes play in the process of teaching? • How important are learning outcomes to the practice of teaching? • How much of what is taught should be attached to achieving set objectives/outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important are the outcomes to you? • How much of what you teach is attached to achieving set objectives/outcomes? • What are the skills/attitudes/mindsets required to become a teacher? • What is effective teaching according to you? • How difficult or easy it is to learn to teach? • Is teaching suited for all individuals; who do you think can teach? • With a little training, will someone be able to teach? Why do you think so?
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Questions for Interview Round 2 *[approx.30 min./participant]*

Founder	Teachers
Part I – Role of teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you list the functions you expect the teacher to perform? • Do you think there is too much pressure to improve and innovate constantly? • What is your idea of a good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you list the functions a teacher should perform? • Are there times when you have felt there is too much pressure to constantly improve and innovate? • What is your idea of a good

<p>teacher?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know a teacher is a good teacher? • In what kind of activities and to what extent do you involve teachers in your intervention? • How competent do you think are the teachers to decide on decisions of curriculum and pedagogy? • Why do you feel so? • What are the various activities for which teachers collaborate? • How often does this happen? • There are certain teachers who are like managers, has that affected the relations between them and the other teachers? 	<p>teacher?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know a teacher is a good teacher? • What are various activities that you have been a part during this intervention? • How competent do you think you are to decide on decisions of curriculum and pedagogy? • Why do you feel so? • What are the various activities for which you collaborate with other teachers? • How often does this happen? • There are certain teachers who are like managers, has that affected the relations between them and the other teachers? • When you started off as a teacher, what was your definition of a teacher? • What is your definition of a teacher now? • How do you think this has changed over time? • What has caused this change?
<p>Part II – Transforming individuals</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much responsibility of ensuring quality education for children lies on the teachers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much responsibility of ensuring quality education for children lies on the teachers?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your program focus on building self-reflection, self-reliance, self-evaluation - how important are these values? • What are the different processes that focus on these values? • Are there any downsides of giving these values more importance than other values? • How insecure are teaching jobs in this school? • Not all of the teachers are currently working, how do you feel about that? • What are some of the tasks teachers do just because they want to ensure their place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important are values like self-evaluation and self-reflection? • What kind of dangers do you see in giving these values more priority? • Not all of the teachers are currently working, how do you feel about that? • Do you feel insecure about your job? • What do you think is important to keep you in this job? • What are some of the tasks you do to ensure you stay in this job?
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Questions for Interview Round 3 [approx.45 min./participant]

Founder	Teachers
Part I – Data, Surveillance	
<p>Which are the assessments that are conducted externally?</p> <p>Other than these are there any internal assessments (how often)</p> <p>What is the purpose of all these assessments?</p> <p>How do the results of these assessments</p>	<p>Which are the assessments that are conducted externally?</p> <p>Other than these are there any internal assessments (how often)</p> <p>What is the purpose of all these assessments?</p> <p>How do the results of these assessments</p>

<p>affect teachers?</p> <p>What is the nature of the data collected through these assessments?</p> <p>How much of the reality does this data capture? (anything it misses)</p> <p>What do you about the things that get missed out?</p> <p>Have data collection practices increased over time? (why?)</p> <p>What are your views about classroom observations?</p> <p>Why are they important?</p> <p>What purpose have these observations served you in terms of your intervention?</p> <p>Who conducts these observations, how often?</p> <p>Is there a set process for conducting these observations? (Any documents you use)</p> <p>What happens after you conduct these observations?</p> <p>How do you think classroom observations affect teachers?</p>	<p>affect you?</p> <p>If you had the choice would you conduct all the tests that you are currently conducting? Why?</p> <p>How much of the reality does this data capture? (anything it misses)</p> <p>How important are these things to you? Do you feel its fair?</p> <p>Do you think you can do something about it?</p> <p>How much power do you have to decide on what to test, when to test and how to test?</p> <p>Have data collection practices increased over time? (why?)</p> <p>How do you feel when you have to submit data related to the test scores of your class?</p> <p>Do you think data has the potential to affect your job or position in the school?</p> <p>What are your views about classroom observations?</p> <p>How do these classroom observations affect you and your work?</p> <p>How comfortable are you with these observations? Why?</p>
<p>Part II – Nature of reforms, Performativity, Power and Resisting neoliberalism</p>	
<p>How important are teachers to your intervention? Why?</p> <p>How are teachers supported?</p> <p>Why do you think the support you provide</p>	<p>As a teacher, what kind of support is provided to you?</p> <p>Is this the support you need?</p> <p>What other kind of support do you need?</p>

<p>is needed by the teachers?</p> <p>Can you talk about a time when you didn't feel happy being a teacher?</p> <p>What are some of the things that make you unhappy or upset as a teacher?</p> <p>Is being a teacher a stressful job? What causes stress?</p> <p>Has there been a time when you did not agree about the suggested change, what did you do about it?</p> <p>How freely can you express your disagreement about implementing a change?</p> <p>You have worked with this school for a ___ number of years, what has been the teacher turnover rate?</p> <p>Why have teachers left the job?</p> <p>Is there an alternative way to understand teaching-learning practices in classrooms other than using outcomes and standards?</p> <p>What would be required to put this alternative way in practice?</p>	<p>When you decide to use a particular resource in class/or to teach in a particular way, what are the factors that affect your choice?</p> <p>Can you talk about a time when you didn't feel happy being a teacher?</p> <p>What are some of the things that make you unhappy or upset as a teacher?</p> <p>Is being a teacher a stressful job? What causes stress?</p> <p>Has there been a time when you did not agree about the suggested change, what did you do about it?</p> <p>How freely can you express your disagreement about implementing a change?</p> <p>You have worked with this school for a few years, what has been the teacher turnover rate?</p> <p>Why have teachers left the job?</p> <p>Is there an alternative way to understand teaching-learning practices in classrooms other than using outcomes and standards?</p> <p>What would be required to put this alternative way in practice?</p>
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