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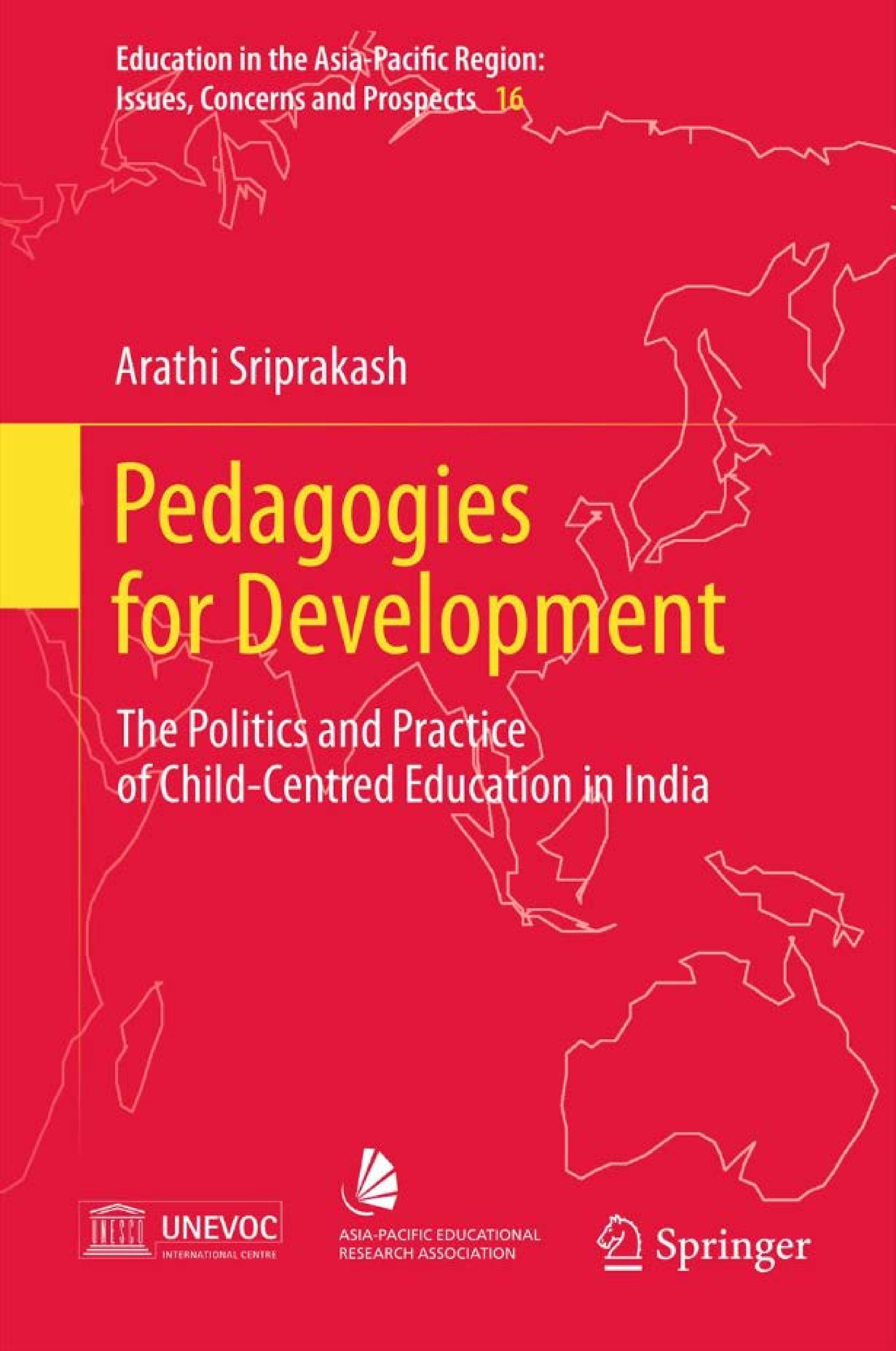

Arathi Sriprakash

Pedagogies for Development

The Politics and Practice of Child-Centred Education in India

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Pedagogies for Development

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The Politics and Practice of Child-Centred Education in India

Springer

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Introduction by the Series Editors

Worldwide, the education community has sought to find more effective ways to improve the quality, equity and relevance of school education. This is of particular importance with regard to education in developing countries, where there are millions of children and adults who have been excluded from formal education. In the case of those who have had an opportunity to attend school, many drop out before they complete a full cycle of primary education for a number of reasons including the irrelevance of the curriculum taught and the systemic disempowerment of teachers and students. It is largely because of such concerns that international, national and local communities have invested in programmes to achieve high-quality Lifelong Learning, Education for All and Education for Sustainable Development. Progressive pedagogies have been utilised in these efforts, and have been linked to the modernisation of schooling in developing countries, aiming to improve the quality of education for the poor, and to social democratisation.

Given this background, Arathi Sriprakash has written an important book that deals with a globally significant subject. She critically examines the politics and practices of progressive, child-centred education to consider how schooling in developing countries can deal more sensitively and effectively with persisting issues of social inequality and exclusion. Although the author focuses on India, the research reported on here provides provocative insights into reform processes which are relevant to other developing countries and beyond.

The volume is a definitive work, drawing as it does on the theoretical contributions of Basil Bernstein's sociology of pedagogy. The sophisticated and nuanced application of Bernstein's theories reveals the social and political complexities of pedagogic reform in the developing world. Bernstein's ideas, developed over many decades in the UK, and which focused on the analysis of social class inequalities in British education, are shown by Sriprakash to have a wider application to other national and social contexts.

This book contributes striking insights concerning the theoretical and practical aspects of reform in contemporary India. The focus is on the delivery of child-centred education in Indian government primary schools which gained momentum in the 1990s through government interventions, internationally sponsored programmes and NGO initiatives for pedagogic reform. It maps the relations between micro and macro practices of education reform, and in doing this it considers how pedagogy is socially and politically constituted at national and school levels.

Sriprakash's research focuses on two specific reform programmes that have been implemented in the South Indian state of Karnataka. The first is the *Nali Kali* ('joyful learning') reform, which has been described as 'one of Karnataka's most successful, innovative and even revolutionary reform programs'. The objectives of this reform were to change the teacher-centred, nonparticipatory traditional pedagogy to one that was activity-based and child-centred. By 1997 there was a Government of Karnataka programme adopting this approach and it was implemented in over 4,000 rural primary schools. The second programme was the Learner-Centred (LC) initiative, implemented in 2005 in government schools in Karnataka. This approach was a reaction to the existing system of primary education which stressed teacher-centred instruction and the memorisation of facts. The LC initiative sought to focus on the relevance of rural schooling, and through a discussion-based pedagogy, it emphasised the importance of how children learn, not only what they learn.

After many months of detailed interviews with teachers, and the undertaking of extensive observations in classrooms, Sriprakash shows how the education reform process is not as rational, neat or coherent as policy pronouncements expound. Instead, they are socially and materially contingent and often reform ideals are recontextualised through competing social and cultural frameworks in schools. The book's in-depth discussion demonstrates the crucial importance for policy and reform actors to address the deep social inequalities operating in Indian schools through which pedagogic practices are shaped. Sriprakash concludes that encouraging teachers to critically reflect on the social role of education, and their social distance from the rural child, is a much needed strategy for future reform.

The book makes a significant contribution in its ethnographic insights and theoretically informed sociological analyses to the study of pedagogic reform and to the field of comparative and international education more broadly. The nuanced methodological approach it offers is especially valuable to education development research which has tended to be oriented towards quantitative analyses of reform. An important addition to critical scholarship, the volume will resonate with educational theorists and reformers interested in social change, not only in India, but also globally.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education — Rupert Maclean
National Institute for Educational Policy Research of Japan (NIER) — Ryo Watanabe
26 July, 2011

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EFA	Education For All
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoI	Government of India
GoK	Government of Karnataka
HPS	Higher Primary School
KSQAO	Karnataka State Quality Assessment Organisation
LC	Learner Centred reform
LPS	Lower Primary School
MHRD	Ministry for Human Resource Development
MLL	Minimum Levels of Learning
NCERT	National Council for Educational Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NK	Nali Kali
NPE	National Policy on Education
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDMC	School Development Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
Std/Stds	Standard/Standards
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

Chapter 1
Introduction: Pedagogy and Development

1.1 Introduction

What is the relationship between child-centred education and development for the poor? Despite significant debate over the implications of progressive education in western schooling systems, child-centred pedagogies have been associated somewhat uncritically with 'quality' education and development in the global south. In the last three decades, numerous 'quality' improvement programs in schools and teacher-training institutions have utilised pedagogic principles clustered around progressive ideals, especially in many regions of Asia and Africa. However, there has been little engagement by reformers and researchers with the social, economic, and political assumptions underlying such models of education. Pedagogy is not value-free, nor does it merely represent a set of technical procedures in classrooms. The significant mobilisation of progressive child-centred discourses by states, aid agencies, and private partners in education compels us as educators and theorists to enquire critically into the implications and the social and political intentions of such pedagogies.

Child-centred education has no manifesto by which to codify its aims. It is represented by a number of overlapping approaches that privilege different philosophical sources and draw on various pedagogic labels, such as child-centred, learner-centred, progressive, humanistic, constructivist, or competence-based education. For instance, the child-centred movement in the United Kingdom during the 1960s and 1970s was broadly understood to be 'critical of authoritarianism, committed to the development of the "whole person", and attentive to a psychology of learning' (Jones 1983:2). In development contexts too, child-centred initiatives take different forms. They often emphasise democratic learning environments, loosened authority relations over the child, more flexible boundaries around what constitutes school knowledge, and constructivist theories of learning.

The broadly democratic rhetoric of such pedagogies lends itself to the dominant neo-liberal development paradigm which has tied social and political democratisation

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to economic advancement. It is in this context that some have critiqued the widespread sponsorship of child-centred pedagogies by international development agencies as 'a process of Westernisation disguised as quality and effective teaching' (Tabulawa 2003:7). Pedagogy has been brought into urgent question by looming global targets for the universalisation of elementary education, pressures from external aid mandates, and the search for 'quality' in schooling. However, pedagogic renewal in development contexts occurs in a contested policy terrain. Managerial discourses have gained traction in education, perhaps nowhere more apparently than in the increasing use of standardised benchmarks and performance measures to account for 'quality' and 'progress'. This benchmarking does not sit easily with the ideals of a relational, learner-specific education implied by many child-centred pedagogic discourses. Nevertheless, different strands of 'democratic' education are carried by the ideas of both standardisation and child centrism and have been taken up simultaneously in development agendas.

It is in this context of reform that this book maps the politics and practices of child-centred education in India. It draws on ethnographic research of two reform programs implemented in rural Indian primary schools to provide a sociological analysis of pedagogy and pedagogic change. The book examines how child-centred education has been constructed as a strategy for development and social reform in India and traces the ways child-centred ideas have been re-shaped by teachers in rural government primary school contexts.

There is an emerging body of work that analyses pedagogic reform in the global south. Studies have reported on the difficulties of training teachers in new pedagogies (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002), on the inadequacies of resources and the piecemeal implementation of reforms (Capper et al. 2002; Courtney 2008), on the effect of conflicting pedagogic frameworks (Nyambe and Wilmot 2008), and on competing cultural constructions of learning (Clarke 2003). Reflecting recently on reforms to teacher education in the United Republic of Tanzania, Vavrus (2009) examined the cultural politics of constructivist learning theories that are often promoted by learner-centred and child-centred pedagogies. Her work underscores the need to attend to the structural and systemic contexts in which pedagogic ideals are expected to be realised. Vavrus calls on policy-makers to 'recognize that the examination system, the material infrastructure of schools, and the length and the quality of teacher education programs limit the likelihood of a fundamental shift from formalism to constructivism' (Vavrus 2009:309). Similarly, Carney's (2008) study of learner-centred reforms in Tibet shows how international and national policy goals are re-shaped by local cultural and educational contexts, with often incompatible interests at play.

These studies raise questions about the global transfer and translations of pedagogic models: what assumptions are made about social and economic development by pedagogic reforms, and what are the conditions and processes of their implementation? The multiple actors in educational policy and practice bring different meanings and interests to development programs. In schools, teachers and administrators interpret and re-contextualise policy with relation to local knowledge, interests, and resources. The intended frameworks of education programs are not always reproduced or sustained in local contexts; there is a need to pay attention to the conditions and possibilities articulated by those working at local levels. With this need in mind, this book not only investigates the construction of child-centred education in Indian policy arenas but also offers a detailed analysis of Indian teachers' discourses and practices as they work with new pedagogic models in their rural primary school contexts.

The ethnographic accounts presented here seek to develop a more complex, culturally contextualised view of pedagogy. Child-centred education has emerged in development policy discourses as an indicator of 'quality'. It has been positioned as a technical method rather than a set of pervasive social relationships between the teacher, the child, and school knowledge. Reflecting on the sponsorship of child-centred education in the Indian context, Alexander (2008) has warned: 'to propose "child-centred teaching methods" as an indicator at national level is to smother with a blanket of unexamined ideology a vital professional debate about the conditions for learning and the complexities of teaching' (Alexander 2008:16). Indeed, researchers such as Barrett (2007) have sought to illuminate the complexity of pedagogic practice in development contexts, especially beyond the common polarisation of teacher-centred/child-centred instruction. Her analysis shows some of the ways pedagogic practices in Tanzanian classrooms have been influenced by pre-colonial community education practices as well as by more recent international discourses on progressive pedagogies. This book takes a similar interest in the pedagogic mixes that occur due to the introduction of child-centred ideas in the Indian context, and emphasises through its analysis the social implications and complexities of such pedagogic change.

The historical, social, and political specificities of pedagogic reforms in developing countries must not be under-played. However, debates about progressive education in western schooling systems have been useful to consider: they can alert us to the potential assumptions and intentions of child-centred pedagogies. For example, progressive pedagogies in the post-war decades in Britain were linked to modernising state education in response to new social and industrial demands, not unlike more recent development agendas in the global south. Jones (1983) has argued that progressive ideas seemed useful at this time in Britain to promote self-motivation and to link education to productive work: '[i]n this context, "self-government" and co-operation were attractive concepts. They stood less for an ideal of students' rights than for the voluntary submission of the student to the behavioural requirements of social unity' (Jones 1983:29).

Such readings of child-centred education in Britain illuminate how progressive philosophies were taken up, reshaped, and institutionalised by the state for its political and social projects. In Britain, this was said to occur through a process of 'de-radicalisation' whereby progressive education came to signify

> a parcel of loosely connected ideas and practices which combined criticism of the status quo with support of techniques that could be used to regenerate, but not to fundamentally transform, mass education; thus its equivocal role: at once the challenger of many features of the school, and a means by which the school adapted itself, the better to survive. (Jones 1983:32)

The ambivalent aims of progressive education identified here by Jones are relevant to appraisals of pedagogic reforms that are now emerging in the global south.

Our attention is turned to the ways transformative discourses can be mobilised by pro-poor development agendas and reshaped, perhaps 'de-radicalised', through processes of institutionalisation. We might ask: in the Indian primary education context, how are new meanings ascribed to child-centred education as it is taken up by the state and fed into development reform strategies?

Analyses of western progressive education can also help us examine the social implications of child-centred pedagogies in the global south for children and their classroom learning. Concerns have been raised against discourses of learner centredness that have legitimised more insidious forms of regulating the child. The individualisation of success, the emphasis on the entrepreneurial self and independent learning, and normative discourses on children's 'natural development' produce new expectations of students (cf. Walkerdine 1992; Bernstein 2000; Popkewitz 2008). Sharp and Green's (1975) well-known ethnography of an English infant and junior school explored how child-centred education was inflected by the moral rhetoric of 'romantic radical conservatism' through which students' successes and failures were regulated by middle-class social expectations. This new form of regulation was seen to neglect 'the realities of a given situation of a stratified society where facilities, prestige and rewards are unequally distributed' (Sharp and Green 1975:226).

The caution such arguments raise against the individualisation of school success/failure and the masking of social stratification is especially relevant to progressive education projects in development contexts. In India, stratification of social class, caste, and gender is deep and explicit. This social ordering requires us to examine critically how the social agendas driving child-centred reform in primary schooling, especially the promises of democratic education, play out in classrooms. Are child-centred practices in rural Indian government schools oriented towards social justice for the rural poor? What social and educational expectations are relayed to children through child-centred programs? The rapid economic growth in India over the last decade and the country's increasingly significant position in global technology industries provide a backdrop to a highly competitive and largely performance-based education system. Private fee-charging providers, especially of English-medium education, are seen as producing a more globally marketable pupil, but what kind of learner is sought to be produced by child-centred pedagogies that are implemented especially in rural, low-income, government school settings?

Examining the deeply competitive and socially stratified context of Indian education, this book investigates the social role of the rural government primary school vis à vis the democratic thrust of two specific child-centred reforms. Child-centred pedagogy represents a significant shift for Indian primary education that has been characterised by textbook-based, rote-oriented, exam-centred, authoritarian, and didactic instruction. Child-centred reform programs have been targeted at the fee-free government school sector which is the largest primary education provider in India, accessed mostly by the country's majority poor and socially marginalised.[1]

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[1] According to 2008 survey data, 71.8% of children aged between 6 and 14 years are enrolled in government schools across India (ASER 2008).

While there have been improvements in access to and enrolment in primary schools, student retention has remained a significant problem in many areas. According to data from 2005, up to 28% of children across the country drop out before their fifth year of formal schooling, and approximately 50% drop out during the first 8 years (GoI 2006). This is despite constitutional obligations on the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Significantly, the Right to Education Act was passed in 2009, legislating education as a fundamental right for all children aged between 6 and 14 years. In this context, pedagogic renewal in Indian government schools has become central to the agenda of redressing the democratic provision of 'quality' education.

1.2 The Task for Teachers

The analysis of pedagogy and pedagogic change presented in this book takes as its focus the perspectives and actions of primary school teachers. Investigating the social and professional positions of teachers provides significant insight into the conditions and processes of child-centred practices in schools. Child-centred ideas on education tend to challenge hierarchic constructions of teacher authority. Broadly, child-centred pedagogies rely on the investment of the teacher towards developing teaching repertoires which 'facilitate' each child's learning. Through such facilitation, teachers' control over students and over the relay of knowledge may appear to be loosened. The personality of the individual teacher is seen to be of central importance to the success of the pedagogy. Such complex expectations of teachers by child-centred pedagogies arguably require opportunities for teacher autonomy within classrooms in order that positive results may be realised and sustained.

However, government primary school teachers in India are often required to work with child-centred reforms in the face of competing professional and social expectations and challenging work conditions. Reflecting on the professional status of Indian teachers in contemporary contexts, Batra (2005:4347) argues that 'most school teachers across the country are being under-trained, misqualified, under-compensated, demotivated instruments of a mechanical system of education'. Kumar's (2005) analysis of colonial and national agendas for Indian education provides a longer historical perspective on the conditions and cultures of teaching. The project of mass education since India's independence from British colonial rule in 1947 introduced new conditions and principles to teaching. Teachers' work became increasingly bureaucratised; centralised decision-making on academic and administrative matters diminished local teachers' authority. At the same time, teachers' moral authority, steeped in gendered and caste-based social hierarchies, was upheld. Contemporary cultures of teachers' work in India have been constituted by both a romanticised moral authority and a bureaucratisation of teachers' work. Kumar captured this tension by identifying teachers as 'meek dictators': having little professional authority but often exercising explicit, authoritarian forms of control over students.

The lens on teachers' perspectives and practices in the analyses that follow not only provides a way to understand the implications of child-centred reforms for teachers' work but also serves to validate their roles in processes of educational change. Teachers are often seen as essential to the functioning and continuity of education reforms, yet their voices have been largely absent from policy-making processes in India and also, as Dyer et al. (2002) have observed, from education research. As Batra (2005) argues, teachers have been the 'missing link' in narratives of Indian education reform. Teacher research in India has been dominated by effectiveness discourses which have not captured the texture and complexity of school processes and teachers' work (cf. Mathur and Khurana 1996; Singh and Kumar 1997; Dutt and Rao 2001; Chandola 2002; Rudramamba 2003). Only a handful of studies have offered in-depth, qualitative insights into Indian school worlds (cf. Thapan 1991; Clarke 2001; Sarangapani 2003; Chawla-Duggan 2007). The focus on teachers' discourses and practices herein responds to the need for greater consideration of teachers' voices in studies of Indian education and acknowledges their central role in re-shaping child-centred pedagogies in schools.

1.3 Organisation of the Book

The accounts of child-centred policy and practice in this book come from a sociological study of two specific reforms implemented in rural government primary schools in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. The two programs, though different in their contexts and in the nature and scope of their implementation, have implied new relationships between child, teacher, and school knowledge. One is the *Nali Kali*, or 'Joyful Learning' reform, which has been implemented in over 4,000 rural government primary schools in Karnataka since 1997, initially as part of the World Bank–funded District Primary Education Program (DPEP). The program is still being delivered by the state government through in-service teacher-training modules. The other model is a more recent initiative in government primary schools led by a non-government organisation (NGO), and referred to in this book as the 'learner-centred' program (or *LC* for short).[2] This initiative was piloted in 23 rural primary schools in Karnataka in 2005 through in-service teacher training and was upscaled to 274 primary schools in 2008.

How do we study pedagogy and pedagogic change? The research for this book attempts to draw on theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that are sensitive to the complexities of the reforms and school contexts investigated. Chapter 2 introduces the school settings and my research approach involving 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork. I discuss the conceptual framework developed for the research to map the politics and practices of child-centred pedagogy in India. Ideas from Basil Bernstein's sociology of pedagogy assisted my analysis of how child-centred ideas have been constituted in Indian policy arenas and reshaped through teachers' discourses and practices in schools. It will be suggested that sociological approaches to education development research could valuably encourage greater understanding of pedagogic reform as a process of social change.

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[2] The pseudonym *LC* has been used in order to protect the identities of teachers and project officers working with the smaller-scale programme.

Chapters 3 and 4 trace the ways in which child-centred ideas have been utilised in national and state-level policy, respectively, analysing the political projects of pedagogic reform in Indian development activities especially since the 1990s. I examine the ways in which international development agencies and private–public partnerships in education have shaped education policy agendas. The ideals and expectations of teachers and students in child-centred policy discourses are analysed, and the two pedagogic reform programs implemented in rural Karnataka schools are introduced. These two models are examined closely in order to gauge the nature and extent of change sought by the different child-centred programs.

Chapter 5 explores the task at hand for teachers. It introduces the 22 primary school teachers who participated in the research and examines how they interpreted their professional roles. The chapter presents an analysis of responses during 'work-story' interviews with teachers, to investigate how a 'good' teacher was conceptualised in relation to the expectations of the child-centred reforms. The analysis focuses on what it means to 'be a teacher' in contexts of cultural change. I explore how the teachers came to the rural government teaching profession, the ways in which the teachers have been socially positioned, and the regulation of the teachers' work in light of child-centred reform ideals.

The work context of primary school teachers frames the discussion in Chapter 6 of how teachers understand the education of the rural child. Using interview data, the chapter draws together teachers' perspectives on the social role of the school and the construction of the rural child as a learner. Strong deficit discourses pertaining to the rural child are revealed, which the teachers in the study used to understand the moral, disciplining function of the school. The chapter analyses how teachers conceptualised the 'good' student in relation to these regulative discourses and the new expectations of child-centred pedagogies. This leads to a detailed analysis in Chapter 7 of the ways in which teachers described child-centred pedagogic strategies as re-shaping their practices of instruction. The analysis reveals how teachers were often unconvinced that child-centred approaches would help students learn the syllabus content, highlighting the competing theoretical frameworks for learning that were operating in these schools.

Chapters 8 and 9 move the focus of the analysis from teachers' discursive interpretations of pedagogy to their classroom practice. The chapters draw on rich ethnographic observational data of two schools, Mallige Higher Primary School and Kamala Higher Primary School, in which the two reform programs were implemented. The discussions seek to illuminate the school and community contexts and the institutional cultures within which child-centred ideas were introduced. The chapters focus on the ways in which two teachers worked with child-centred pedagogies in their Grade 2 classrooms. By means of these classroom observations, I examine the social messages relayed to children in terms of the democratic ideals of the reform programs.

The book concludes by returning to its overarching question: what is the relationship between pedagogy and development? In Chapter 10, I reflect on what it has meant to introduce child-centred principles into rural Indian primary schools in terms of the new, challenging subject positions produced for learners. The discussion re-examines the construction of 'quality education for all' in development agendas and considers the conditions necessary for child-centred pedagogy to be able to contribute to the improvement of education provision, especially of education for children of the rural poor. The democratic promises made by child-centred discourses, and how these play out in classrooms, call for careful reassessment of the assumptions made by education development programs. It is hoped that this study offers a view of pedagogic reform as socially contested, and in doing so, contributes to debates about the conceptualisation and enactment of education policy in development contexts.

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Chapter 2
Researching Pedagogic Reform

This chapter describes how a sociological research approach was used to gain insights into the processes and effects of education development programs in India. Tracing the implementation of two child-centred reforms called for methodological attentiveness to the complexities of social practice in rural Indian primary schools. As I show, Basil Bernstein's theoretical contributions to the sociology of pedagogy offer analytic tools with which to map the relations between the macro and micro devices of education reform – the devices through which child-centred pedagogy in India has been constituted at national, state, and school levels. This chapter presents a Bernsteinian conceptual framework for analysing the politics and practice of pedagogy and sets out the context of the research in which it was used. I describe the ethnographic approach of the study and flag up some issues relating to researcher positionality in social research. My overall intention in this chapter is to consider the value of in-depth ethnographic methodologies in education development research and to suggest the specific contribution of Bernstein's sociological frameworks to researching pedagogic reform.

2.1 A Sociological Analysis of Pedagogy

Pedagogic renewal, especially in child-centred education, has been associated with 'quality improvement' in many Education For All (EFA) settings. However, development policy and research often draw on narrow technicist conceptualisations of pedagogy, and indicators used to evaluate pedagogic change tend to eschew the social significance of reform projects. As Alexander's (2008:7–8) critique of the dominant EFA paradigm suggests:

> Pedagogy is defined as a controllable input rather than as a process whose dynamic reflects the unique circumstances of each classroom and which is therefore variable and unpredictable; and the only aspects of pedagogy which are admitted as 'inputs' are those which can

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> be measured. The whole exercise becomes impossibly reductionist, and the educational endeavour itself is as a consequence trivialised.

Establishers of the link in development discourses between child-centred education and 'quality' have overlooked the possibilities for a wider spectrum, or mixture, of pedagogic practices in development activity. Consequently, 'quality' teaching in India has been constituted in numerous programs and evaluation exercises through easily visible markers associated with child-centred practice: the presence of wall-charts, songs and games, and students seated in groups, for example. Such practices become axiologically charged as evidence of 'good' teaching, rendering them impervious to a deeper critique of their assumptions, processes, and effects (cf. Maton 2010). Writing on the Indian context, Alexander (2008:16) goes further to warn:

> it is then very difficult for teachers to do other than attempt to enact the nostrum, or to pretend that they are doing so. In this way, just as "survival rate to grade 5" is a dubious proxy for quality at the level of policy, so "group work" or "use of TLMs" [teaching-learning materials] become no less dubious proxies for child-centredness at the level of classroom practice.

There is a strong case for development research to build an analytic focus around the principles, processes, and effects of educational programs, to avoid being seduced by charged-up rhetoric or reduced to a narrow set of measures. We are pushed to move from surveying merely *what* is in classrooms to analysing *how* pedagogic practices are produced. This kind of analysis could offer a more nuanced account of pedagogy, beyond the common rhetorical dualisms of 'teacher-centred' and 'child-centred' instruction. The intention in this revised approach is to foreground *relationality* over enumeration. Seen in this way, the methodological approach presented in this book is one response to the increasingly apparent articulation of social justice concerns in education through managerial discourses of 'quality improvement'.

For example, a relational analysis of pedagogy enables us to trace more explicitly the expectations and resources involved in a program's implementation, often taken for granted by the imperatives of policy and programmatic reform. Teachers are charged with the task of implementing classroom reforms often without due consideration of the new forms of regulation introduced by such programs, and the social, institutional, and pedagogic challenges subsequently faced. In development contexts, this can be heightened by the urgency and precarious nature of reform activity. Projects often start as small-scale innovations and only gain legitimacy if they are seen to be transferable and upscalable. The reformist context of EFA settings is often marked by shifting and competing political priorities, contingencies of capital, and the interests of multiple actors, agencies, and parallel programs.

Basil Bernstein's theories encourage us to examine the social devices of pedagogy, and in doing so, make more explicit the potentially competing social, pedagogic, and institutional frameworks teachers and students are expected to deal with. Bernstein is arguably one of the few educational theorists who examined the social significance of the pedagogic relay of knowledge at both micro and macro levels. His ideas on pedagogic relationships were developed over four decades in the United Kingdom: his earlier work examined the implications of communication codes, curricular and pedagogic practices for social reproduction (e.g. Bernstein 1971, 1973), and in his later work he developed a detailed analysis of the production and circulation of pedagogic discourses (e.g. Bernstein 1990). Though his work was based on an analysis of social class inequalities in British education practices, Bernstein's detailed language of description for pedagogy has the potential to be applied across different national and social contexts.

Indeed, there has been an emerging interest in the application of Bernstein's framework in developing country contexts. Such research has examined the implementation of new pedagogic models with respect to existing pedagogic frameworks, the ways cultural and social expectations play out in schools, and the challenges of schooling in under-resourced systems and settings. For example, Barrett (2007) drew on Bernstein's educational codes while researching classroom practices in Tanzanian primary schools. Her work interrogated the tendency of education research to polarise learner-centred and teacher-centred pedagogies. Barrett's detailed analysis, enabled in part by Bernstein's categories, revealed the richness of Tanzanian teachers' 'pedagogic palettes' beyond the learner-centred and teacher-centred dichotomy (Barrett 2007:289). Nyambe and Wilmot (2008) drew on Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing (see below) to analyse relations of power and control in Namibian teacher-educators' pedagogic discourses and practices. Bernstein's analytic distinctions helped these researchers examine teacher-educators' interpretation and practice of a learner-centred pedagogy in initial teacher-training programs. Hoadley (2008) also employed Bernstein's theories of classification and framing in her study of classroom practice in South African primary school contexts. This enabled her to develop 'a model for the consideration of pedagogic variation across different social class school settings', aiming to bring into sharper focus 'the precise mechanisms through which inequalities are reproduced' (Hoadley 2008:76). The value of Bernstein's educational codes to Hoadley's South African research was in the depth of insight it enabled in 'a developing world context where conventional notions of how pedagogy and schools function cannot be taken for granted' (Hoadley 2008:64).

Such studies point to the potential value of Bernstein's ideas in analysing complex social relations within different education systems. Of particular interest to me is the methodological possibility of analysing, using Bernstein's theories, multiple social dimensions in the Indian context such as caste and rurality, local frameworks of learning, and the conditions and histories of the education system. As I outline below, Bernstein's theories on pedagogic codes (1975), and his more recent ideas on the recontextualisation of pedagogic discourses (1990, 2000), became particularly important to the analytic approach of my research.

2.1.1 Pedagogic Coding: Classification and Framing

> How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and principles of social control. (Bernstein 1971:47)

Bernstein's sociology theorised different 'models' of pedagogy through which social messages are circulated. For example, child-centred pedagogies tend to represent what he called a 'competence' model of pedagogy. Such pedagogies emphasise the competence that learners possess; the evaluative criteria of learning focus on presences rather than on absences of knowledge. The *individual* differences between learners replace an explicit stratification of learners in classrooms. Learners have considerable control over the use of time, space, and resources in the classroom, which positions them as self-regulating and constructs the teacher as a facilitator. Pedagogic resources are less likely to be pre-packaged as the degree of teacher autonomy over the relay is expanded.

Rote-based, teacher-centred textbook and examination cultures of schooling are often found in India (cf. Alexander 2001; Kumar 2005) and bear some similarity to what Bernstein called a 'performance' orientation to pedagogy. Of course, there are varying modes of practice, but a 'performance' model is characterised by tighter relations of pedagogic input and outputs. For example, it might feature strong boundaries regarding time, space, and discourse in the classroom; an evaluation orientation that focuses on absences (of content, skill, etc.); explicit forms of control; the pedagogic text as the student's (graded) performance; a low degree of learner control with respect to regulation of the curriculum and transmission; and a relatively low cost of transmission in terms of physical resources and teacher training, thus less restrictions on teacher supply. Such performance modes give rise to 'visible' principles of instruction, whereby 'the hierarchical relations between teacher and pupils, the rules of organisation (sequence and pace), and the criteria are explicit and so known to the pupils' (Bernstein 2000:109).

Bernstein's pedagogic models draw on a theory of educational codes. This theory employs the concepts of what he termed the 'classification' and 'framing' of knowledge. Both classification and framing can be defined along a continuum of strength to weakness. The term 'classification' is used to denote the boundaries *between* categories. For example, a competence model might have a weak classification of knowledge selection if it attempts to use an integrated syllabus where boundaries between subject areas are not always distinct. 'Framing' in Bernstein's work referred to the degree of control *within* a pedagogic relation. He stated that

> where the framing is strong, the transmitter has explicit control over selection, sequencing, pacing [of knowledge], criteria [of evaluation], and the social base [which makes this transmission possible]. (Bernstein 2000:13)

Bernstein's concept of framing helps identify the hierarchic relations and social regulation of a pedagogic interaction. This can include the expectations of conduct, character, or manner over students and teachers which produce a 'moral' or 'regulative' pedagogic discourse. The notion of framing also helps analyse the nature of control over 'instructional' elements of pedagogic interaction: in other words, those aspects of pedagogy that refer to the selection, sequencing, pacing, and criteria of knowledge. These elements can have relatively weaker or stronger framing within different pedagogic interactions.

Bernstein conceptualised the instructional discourse as embedded in the regulative discourse, asking us to consider the rules by which this occurs:

> We shall define pedagogic discourse as the rule which embeds a discourse of competence (skills of various kinds) into a discourse of social order in such a way that the latter always dominates the former. We shall call the discourse transmitting specialised competences and their relation to each other *instructional* discourse and the discourse creating specialized order, relation, and identity, *regulative* discourse. (Bernstein 1990:183)

Broadly speaking, child-centred education employs a weaker framing of the regulative discourse and of the instructional discourse. Here, the child is given greater apparent control over their interactions and their learning. Competence models of pedagogy tend to be concerned with 'facilitation' over 'visible' modes of teacher 'instruction'. This can give rise to an 'invisible' (weakly framed) pedagogy whereby the child is seen as the author of the pedagogic practice, and even the authority of the interaction. Bernstein's ideas of classification and framing were particularly useful for studying child-centred education reforms in India as they enabled a close inspection of the social devices of education development programs. As I explore in Chapter 4, the child-centred pedagogic reforms examined in this study sought to shift away from such visible, performance pedagogic modes.

A number of educational researchers in the west have found the concepts of classification and framing useful in analysing the structure of pedagogy. In particular, research work by Morais and Neves (2001) and their colleagues (cf. Morais et al. 2004; Neves et al. 2004) has demonstrated the value of a detailed coding of observational and interview data in identifying where and how power and control occurs in pedagogic relay. As Arnot and Reay noted in their study on pupil consultation as a pedagogic strategy in English schools, such detailed analyses uncover the relative strengths and variations of educational codes, enabling researchers to address the social and educational implications of pedagogy: 'consulting pupils about their learning is unlikely to make a difference unless we clarify much more meticulously possible variations in code strength and relaxation' (2004:149).

Less developed in the sociology of pedagogy is how the concepts of classification and framing can be used to analyse the introduction of competence modes of pedagogy into the performance-based systems of low-income, under-resourced schools, such as those in rural Indian contexts. The reforms discussed in this study have attempted to embed certain principles of a competent pedagogy into a strong performance system. In this context, I suggest that Bernstein's theory of educational codes might facilitate an examination of where and how competence-oriented principles of pedagogy are used in official arenas and in teachers' discourse and practice. Thus, moving beyond an oppositional view of competence and performance models, this research examines the mixes and layers of pedagogy: the pedagogic palettes and palimpsests of educational change.

We might expect tensions to arise through the introduction of competence pedagogic modes into low-income, under-resourced, performance-oriented systems. For example, Bernstein drew attention to the high transmission 'costs' associated with competence pedagogies. These ‘costs’ involve the complexity of the theoretical base for teacher training, pedagogic resources and infrastructure, small class sizes, planning and evaluation time, and socialisation of community into the school. Bernstein argued that such costs are often hidden and charged to the individual teachers who, as we shall see in the Indian case, are working in a highly bureaucratised and low-status profession. In his critique of progressive education in England, Bernstein (1975) recognised the struggle that teachers experienced due to shifts towards such ‘invisible’ pedagogic modes. While his was a social class analysis located specifically in England, Bernstein identified certain conditions for the successful implementation of invisible pedagogies that are valuable when considering the reform contexts explored in this book.

> The invisible pedagogy presupposes a particular form of maternal primary socialization *and* a small class of pupils *and* a particular architecture. Where these are absent, the teacher may well find great difficulty. Ideally the invisible pedagogy frees the teacher so that time is available for ameliorating the difficulties of any one child, but if the class is large, the socialisation, from the point of view of the school, inadequate, the architecture inappropriate, then such individual assistance becomes infrequent and problematic. Here we see that such a pedagogy, if it is to be successfully implemented in its own terms, necessarily requires minimally the same physical conditions of the middle-class school. It is an *expensive* pedagogy because it is derived from an expensive class: the middle class. (Bernstein 1975:129, original emphases)

The demands placed on teachers to implement an ‘expensive’ competence pedagogy require a focus on both the material conditions and the social contexts of schooling processes. Bernstein’s categories bring attention to the rules which shape pedagogic modes and the intended principles of pedagogic change. At both macro and micro levels, this kind of analysis keeps in focus the social and political projects of pedagogy rather than representing teaching processes as value-free or purely technical.

2.1.2 The Recontextualisation of Pedagogic Discourse

Child-centred reforms in India have been framed by international and national policy discourses; these discourses are re-shaped by actors in state and non-state agencies, and mediated by teachers in school contexts. Bernstein’s ideas on pedagogic ‘recontextualisation’ encourage an analysis of how pedagogic discourses are contested by different actors, interests, and conditions of possibility. Bernstein described how pedagogic discourses are produced by bringing social practices and struggles into relation with instructional codes (how knowledge is selected, sequenced, paced, and evaluated). In this way, a pedagogic discourse actually operates as a *recontextualising* principle ‘which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order’ (Bernstein 2000:33). The significance of this view is that pedagogy is seen as process which is connected to struggles over social change. In terms of researching pedagogy, then, the concept of recontextualisation calls theorists to examine the social relations through which pedagogic discourses are constituted and contested.

Bernstein suggested that pedagogic recontextualisation occurs in different arenas or ‘fields’; the circulation of different actors and interests in various social and political fields shape the movement and production of educational discourses. He drew a distinction between the ‘official recontextualising field’ (ORF) and the ‘pedagogic recontextualising field’ (PRF). The former (ORF) refers to the arena created and dominated by the state and its selected agencies for ‘the construction and surveillance’ of official pedagogic discourse (Bernstein 2000:115). This arena is itself multiply constituted and can produce mixed pedagogic messages, as my subsequent analyses of national and state discourses of child-centred education in India illustrate. For Bernstein, the PRF is constituted by pedagogues in schools and colleges and by the work of specialised journals or research bodies. Although he makes a distinction between these two fields (the ORF and PRF), it is not always helpful to think of each field as necessarily separate, singular, or stable, especially across different social contexts. The complex and sometimes precarious partnerships between state and non-state actors in Indian education development is a case in point (cf. Mukhopadhyay 2008; Sarangapani and Vasavi 2003). Rather, as Bernstein himself noted, it is of interest to trace how discourses move: how discourses are mobilised, reshaped, and recontextualised by actors in shifting relations with each other.

Bernstein’s detailed language of pedagogic discourses and their recontextualisation have significant empirical value for analysing pedagogic relationships at the macro levels of policy and the micro levels of schools and classrooms. However, Bernstein himself acknowledged the limits of these concepts in capturing the ‘full choreography’ of school life: on their own they fail to offer ‘a delicate description of the full repertoire of arabesques of interaction within any classroom, staff room, or family’ (Bernstein 1990:7). Ethnographic research approaches were used in the following study to develop more delicate accounts of child-centred education in Indian rural primary schools. In the following section, I outline the context of the research and how Bernstein’s sociology was used in the ethnography of pedagogic reform.

2.2 Researching Education Reform in Karnataka

2.2.1 Research Context

The empirical research for this book was conducted in the south Indian state of Karnataka over an 11-month period in 2007. Government primary schools in the state had been involved in a number of different EFA programs and initiatives implemented by government and non-government agencies (including the two child-centred reforms analysed in this study). Compared to national economic and education indicators, areas of Karnataka are considered to be relatively ‘developed’.

The 2005 Human Development Report of Karnataka (GoK 2006) ranked the state as seventh in India according to its Human Development Index (HDI).[1] State-wide figures suggest Karnataka has higher literacy rates, gender parity indices, and school retention rates than national averages. The state is popularly positioned as having 'pride of place'[2] in India's booming information technology, business process outsourcing, and foreign investment industries since the economic liberalisation of the 1990s. For the elite consuming classes, the state capital of Bangalore can be experienced as a cosmopolitan metropole with its commercial centres, international branding, 'silicon city', and plethora of high-end English medium private educational institutions. Regional urban centres like Mysore, near to which this research was conducted, also play an increasingly prominent part in Karnataka's development narrative.

Thus, the research took place in a state of India which appears to have made relative economic and educational progress. However, Karnataka is still faced with significant social-economic and educational disadvantage, as illustrated by the profiles of schools and village communities presented below. Indeed, the partiality of India's economic growth has been emphasised by many theorists, such as Corbridge and Harriss who have argued strongly that India's economic liberalisation has consistently addressed 'the concerns of India's urban and industrial (and even agricultural or political) elites' with little regard for the poor, who are the country's social majority (2000:160).

The research focused on two different child-centred pedagogic reforms, *Nali Kali (NK)* and the *learner-centred (LC)* program, being implemented in neighbouring 'clusters' of villages in the district of Mysore. Mysore district, located in the south of the state, is one of the 27 administrative districts of Karnataka. The district has a population of approximately 2.7 million (the total population of Karnataka is approximately 53 million) and expands over 6,000 km^2. Mysore district is divided into seven *taluks* (administrative blocks), and each *taluk* is organised into administrative 'clusters', usually of 15–25 villages. Each village typically has one government primary school. The research was conducted in Mallige cluster and Kamala cluster, which are both located in the same *taluk*.[3] The *LC* program was being implemented in standards 1 through to 5 (the first 5 years of primary schooling) across all of the 22 government primary schools in Kamala cluster. The *Nali Kali* program was being implemented in all 19 government primary schools in Mallige cluster for standards 1 and 2.

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[1] The Human Development Index (HDI) draws on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) methodology of calculating human development-based measures such as life expectancy, literacy rates, and economic expenditure.

[2] The Government of Karnataka's *Report Perspective Plan for Education in Karnataka* (2007a:9) described the state as having 'pride of place' in fields of information and communication technology and biotechnology.

[3] Pseudonyms are used for the *taluk*, clusters, villages, schools, teachers, students, and community members represented in the study.

Table 2.1 2001 Population summary, Mallige cluster and Kamala cluster

	Number of households	Total population	Average SC population (%)	Average ST population (%)	Literacy rate (%)
Mallige cluster	3,318	15,702	23	18	53
Kamala cluster	3,843	18,668	16	16	43

Source: Census of India 2001

See Appendix for notes on SC and ST caste categorisation

The *taluk* in which the two village clusters are located is predominantly agricultural. According to 2001 census information, over 80% of both men and women worked in the agricultural sector and common crops included rice, millet, corn, groundnuts, and in some cases, tobacco. In the larger villages of the region, including the cluster centres of Mallige and Kamala, it was more common to see local small businesses and villagers commuting to neighbouring towns for work in industries. Census data from 2001 (see Table 2.1) indicate that over one-third of the population in both clusters are categorised as Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) (see Appendix for notes on caste). Data also suggest that Mallige cluster has a higher average literacy rate than Kamala cluster; however, these figures do not reveal the differences between villages in each cluster. More detailed pictures of the social contexts of Kamala and Mallige villages are presented in the case studies of schooling in Chapters 8 and 9.

The research was conducted in 16 rural primary school communities, seven located in Mallige cluster and nine located in Kamala cluster. All the schools were funded and administered by the Government of Karnataka. The schools selected for the study were ‘functional’ in that they were known to have regularly attending teachers engaged in teaching activity. Lower Primary Schools (LPS, standards 1–5) and Higher Primary Schools (HPS, standards 1–7) from various-sized villages participated in the research, including the two large HPS schools of Mallige village and Kamala village, the main villages of the two clusters. A significant factor in the selection of schools was their accessibility. I travelled to schools by public bus; though in some cases vehicle hire or walking was required.

The infrastructural facilities and administrative organisation of the schools were comparable across the two clusters. Table 2.2 shows the range of school size by student enrolment and teaching staff. It also depicts the varying percentage of students categorised as Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) at each school, and the proportion of these groups in the village community. Village-level census data from 2001 indicate an average literacy rate of 47.3% in the selected Kamala cluster communities and 53.7% in the selected Mallige villages; this is lower than the Karnataka state average (66.6%) and nation-wide average (64.8%) calculated in the same year. Shorthand is used in this book to denote schools in each cluster: M*x* for schools in Mallige cluster, K*x* for schools in Kamala cluster.

The research focused on learning about the ways in which teachers were interpreting the child-centred reform programs in relation to their teaching contexts. Twenty-two teachers from the schools in Mallige and Kamala clusters were key participants in the study, and they came from diverse backgrounds in terms of career

Table 2.2 School profiles, Mallige cluster and Kamala cluster

School name	Standards taught	Number of teacher positions filled (incl. head teacher)	Number of students enrolled	Percentage of SC/ST students enrolled (%)	Percentage of SC/ST in village population (%)	Literacy rate in village[a] (2001 census data) (%)
Mallige cluster						
Mallige HPS, M1	1–7	11	422	68	55	55
M2	1–7	8	263	57	39	46
M3	1–7	9	253	70	72	41
M4	1–7	5	137	36	25	51
M5	1–5	2	43	0	n/a	n/a
M6	1–7	4	76	20	23	54
M7	1–5	1	11	0	0	75
Kamala cluster						
Kamala HPS, K1	1–7	20	569	68	52	52
K2	1–7	7	178	88	79	39
K3	1–7	6	210	72	36	46
K4	1–7	7	168	11	9	51
K5	1–5	2	53	0	0	n/a
K6	1–5	2	29	90	74	47
K7	1–5	2	31	32	19	54
K8	1–5	1	40	80	38	42
K9	1–5	2	21	100	n/a	n/a

Sources: Block Education Office records 2007 and Census of India 2001

[a] Based on 2001 census data which calculates literacy rates for population over 7 years of age

Table 2.3 Profiles of teachers who participated in the research

Name	Age	M/F	Years of Govt. service	Years in current school	Caste/ religion[a]	School	Classes taught
Kamala cluster							
Anitha	39	F	10	10	Vokkaliga	Kamala HPS	2
Saraswathi	40	F	13	9	Brahmin	Kamala HPS	1
Saira	31	F	5	5	Muslim	K2	1–4
Mahendra	54	M	16	5	Lingayat	K3	1–4
Lalitha	31	F	9	9	Vokkaliga	K4	1–4
Mary Vasantha	46	F	16	16	Christian	K5	1–4
Lingaraju	52	M	22	22	SC	K5	5, HM
Sundari	42	F	9	2	Koorgi	K6	1–4
Sumithra	30	F	9	4	Brahmin	K7	1–4
Ramesha	40	M	13	13	Nayaka ST	K8	1–4, HM
Shivanna	39	M	9	9	Nayaka ST	K9	1–4
Mallige cluster							
Savitha	38	F	15	10	Nayaka ST	Mallige HPS	2
Sujatha	30	F	9	9	Vokkaliga	Mallige HPS	1
Rajesh	46	M	25	1	Lingayat	M2	5, English
Leelamba	33	F	8	8	Lingayat	M2	1
Radhamani	45	F	4	4	Vokkaliga	M3	1–3
Sudharani	26	F	5	5	Vokkaliga	M3	1–3
Stella Gita	37	F	13	6	Christian	M4	3–5
Jayakumara	35	F	13	8	SC	M4	1, 2
Sabina	44	F	11	11	Muslim	M5	1–3
Govindappa	43	M	9	1	Lingayat	M6	1, 2
Mahesha	37	M	13	10	Brahmin	M7	1–5

[a] See Appendix for notes on caste

experience, age, gender, caste, and religion. During the course of the study, I also spoke with other teachers at the schools whose views have at times also been represented. The study focused on standard 1 and 2 teachers because both the *Nali Kali* and *LC* reform programs had been implemented for these grades. The majority of teachers involved in the study were women, due to the greater proportion of women teaching the younger grades in Mallige and Kamala clusters. Table 2.3 introduces key teacher-participants of the research.

2.2.2 Research Approach

I used two levels of inquiry to explore how child-centred education had been recontextualised in both the official arena (ORF) and in schools (PRF). In the first level of inquiry, I examined the policy contexts and 'official' pedagogic discourses of the

Nali Kali and LC reforms. Indian Government policy and NGO program documents (in English) were analysed using Bernstein's pedagogic codes to explore the ideals of, and principles behind, the child-centred programs. As Chapter 4 shows, I examined the relative strengths of power (classification) and control (framing) in the instructional and regulative features of Nali Kali and LC ideals to identify more explicitly how pedagogic changes occurred. I observed in-service training sessions in both programs and analysed program material to explore the new expectations of teachers in the reform contexts. I discussed the aims of child-centred education with government administrators at district and state levels, as well as with NGO officers involved in the LC program. I also drew on secondary research and government data on teacher-training and recruitment, school infrastructure, and community demographics to develop a contextual understanding of these teachers' work.

The second level of inquiry focused on teachers' recontextualisation of the two reforms, *Nali Kali* and *LC*. Through in-depth interviews with teachers and observations of their classroom practices, I explored the ways in which teachers positioned themselves and their work and how they interpreted and related to the expectations and principles of the reform programs. Following Smyth et al. (2000), semi-structured interviews with the 22 teacher-participants were designed to produce 'work-story' accounts of the structural relations of teachers' work alongside teachers' shifting subjectivities. My aim was to seek out 'the dynamic interplay between the structuring nature of discourses and their acceptance, resistance, and manipulation by teachers' (Smyth et al. 2000:148). Interview questions were developed around themes of biography, teaching, learners, community, work processes, and school change; the intention was to examine the multiple, co-constitutive dimensions of 'being a teacher' in the rural Karnataka context.

Hour-long audio-recorded interviews were conducted after I had spent some time interacting informally with teachers and observing their teaching. During these interviews, it seemed to me that the almost banal, 'everyday' nature of the questions quickly comforted the few teachers who had initially appeared nervous about the interview process. Interviews were held in classrooms, on verandahs, or anywhere we were able to find a relatively quiet space. However, while conducting most interviews it was not possible to be completely free of 'interruption'. Schools are busy, active places, and the curiosity of staff, students, and parents, sometimes peering through windows, or joining in discussions, could not be avoided. A research assistant helped me conduct the interviews; as a resident in Mysore district with local knowledge and as a native-speaker of Kannada, Suma's help with this project was invaluable.

My analysis of teachers' work-story interview data was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved a thematic coding, drawing on the broad categories of the interview questions. The second stage involved a closer analysis of data in which new codes emerged within and across each category. The third stage of analysis involved a Bernsteinian reading of teachers' accounts. I revisited interview transcripts to identify how teachers spoke about the structuring principles of the pedagogic programs, the nature of power (classification) and control (framing) over the selection, sequence, pacing, and evaluation of knowledge, and the regulation of their learners.

Close engagement with teachers over the 11-month period of in situ research produced ethnographic accounts of teachers' work and pedagogic practices across the 16 rural schools. To deepen my analysis, I carried out observational research for 2 months in Mallige HPS and in Kamala HPS. I was able to experience school and community functions, parent-teacher evenings, as well as the seemingly mundane routines of the school day. The hum of life in school can be difficult to capture. Observing and attempting to record by handwriting a 'thick description' of the dynamism, messiness, and at times, clamour of young children being taught posed methodological challenges and limitations. Drawing on Bernstein's instructional categories, I made detailed notes on the sequencing and pacing of knowledge in these classrooms and on the selection of materials, modes of questioning, evaluation, grouping, feedback, and hierarchies in classroom relations.

My analysis of observational data was a lengthy process that began during the initial review and writing up of observation notes during the fieldwork, and then involved a systematic coding of data using Bernstein's categories. The strategy of representing observational data as 'episodes' was adapted from Sarangapani's (2003) ethnography of schooling in north India and other interpretive studies of education processes (cf. Youdell 2006; Connolly 2004; Woods 1990). Presenting slices of school life as 'episodes' – bracketed by time, space, and actors – enabled me to capture and analyse the recontextualisation of pedagogy in practice. The episodes from the in-depth case studies of *Nali Kali* in Mallige HPS and *LC* in Kamala HPS are analysed in Chapters 8 and 9 of this book.

The accounts from teachers presented in this study have been drawn from the audio-recorded 'work-story' interviews which were translated and transcribed into English. The main language used by teachers in interviews was Kannada; however, the interviews generated what Halai (2007) describes as 'bilingual data': teachers often used English for school-related and general vocabulary (e.g. 'class', 'time-table', 'training', 'active', 'dull'), producing mixed English and Kannada sentences. The English words used by teachers were retained in transcriptions. When English terms carried a specific local meaning, that meaning has been highlighted in this book by the use of footnotes or brackets. Some words were difficult to translate into English and convey the intended meaning. For example, *bejaaru* can mean sad, bad, or bored, depending on its usage. Idioms and other words or phrases in Kannada that were difficult to translate have been kept in Kannada and presented in italics, with the closest English translation in brackets. When teachers spoke about their young students, they often did so without gender-specific language. In this case, I have used 'the child' in transcriptions rather than assuming gendered pronouns. When gendered language was used, this has been retained in transcriptions. In Box 2.1 I outline the conventions used to represent data.

Box 2.1 Conventions Used in the Representation of Interview and Observational Data

The following transcription code has been used to present quotes from teachers:

…	participant pause
[…]	omitted speech
[*action*]	description of participant action, tone, or stress
[elaboration]	text inserted by researcher for elaboration or explanation

This convention has been also used in observational episodes for the classroom case studies in Chapters 8 and 9. Additionally, the following abbreviations delineate speakers:

S1, S2	individually identifiable student speaking
S	a number of students speaking together

To help identify teachers, quotes taken from transcripts of recorded interviews are followed by the teacher's name, the program they are working with (*NK* or *LC*), and their school identifier (see Table 2.3), for example, Lalitha *LC* K4.

2.2.3 Research Relations and Positionality

The intentions of this chapter are to contextualise the research on which this book is based and also to suggest the contribution of theoretically focused ethnographic approaches to education development research. It is hoped that the level of methodological detail presented here will be especially useful for educational researchers designing their own projects. As a doctoral student preparing for this study, I found that candid reflections of fieldwork experiences in research publications offered thought-provoking insights into the simultaneously precarious and powerful position of the researcher, the socially and politically contingent nature of the research process, and the unanticipated interactions and outcomes of even the most deliberated of research designs. In these ways, research itself can be seen as a social practice through which the assumptions, interests, and conditions of the research endeavour are brought into relation with the contexts of its inquiry. I end this chapter by sharing some of my experiences of the research process in rural Karnataka. I flag up some of the ways in which my shifting position in the field as, for example, a researcher, foreigner, female, and teacher, shaped my interactions.

The notion of 'reflexivity' is sometimes crudely presented as a 'tool' with which researchers are able to identify, and even apologise for, the power-dynamics of research relations. As Nagar (2002) and Raju (2002) have argued, research studies that 'do' reflexivity often do so in ways that fail to adequately engage with the contingencies and effects of power, social context, and history. Moore and Muller (1999) contend that 'reflexivity' is often used as a claim to 'authenticity' in research, problematically presented in and of itself as a theoretically sustainable approach: 'This displaced "reflexivity", re-presented as a claim to authenticity, cannot reveal the principles whereby these authors produce the world within which they locate themselves' (Moore and Muller 1999:203). Below, I briefly reflect on fieldwork relations, not as a means of 'authenticating' this book's representations of rural Karnataka schools, but to further open the space for research to be seen as a social practice in which (often competing) assumptions and interests are constantly negotiated.

With the permission of the state government (from the Commissioner of Public Instruction) I spent 11 months in Kamala and Mallige clusters to conduct the research for this study. I set up meetings with cluster-level government and non-government officials to introduce the intentions of the research and to select schools to approach. On my first visit to each school I met the head teacher to introduce myself, describe the project, and request permission to meet teachers and seek their consent for voluntary participation in the research. As it turned out, I had already interacted with a number of teachers on the village buses or in the town centres before these initial visits to schools. The word had spread about the 'Australian madam' who had come to visit schools in the area (madam being the common title used for female teachers). Many teachers seemed intrigued about why I had come to Mysore district and asked numerous questions about my family, my work, my education background, and my previous experiences as a school teacher in Australia and England. Many seemed especially curious about my religion and caste background, perhaps particularly since I did not wear common identifiers in the way of jewellery or a *bindi*.

The head teachers and teachers in Mallige and Kamala clusters were by and large very accepting of my invitation to participate in the research. I soon learned of the prevailing culture in which government and non-government 'officers' (*adhikaris*) visited schools, often unannounced, with the expectation that teachers would oblige their interests. Visits from such officials often involved inspections, evaluations, and surveys of a school's administration – the use of funds and resources, attendance of teachers and students, and upkeep of school records, for example. Perhaps positioning me in a similar vein, the initial assumption made by most head teachers was that my primary interest was to collect and check *mahiti* (information) about school enrolment, the provision of school lunches, or other such 'accountability' matters of the school's administration.

In one sense, I was able to take advantage of the inspectorial culture in the education bureaucracy to gain access to schools; I was one of many who arrived in schools seeking information. However, my interests in developing an ongoing and open rapport with teachers meant it was crucial for me to position myself differently and distance myself from bureaucratic hierarchies. I explained to teachers that I was interested in learning about their experiences and perspectives of child-centred reforms rather than in evaluating their practices, testing students, or inspecting school records. I made explicit that I was not representing government or non-government agencies in Karnataka, and I only collected information from school records after I had spent many weeks in each school. During these early interactions, it was likely that being female, relatively young, and Australian-Indian helped me to be positioned outside the official education bureaucracy.

My extended presence in schools also helped to differentiate my interests from those of ‘officers’. For example, I visited Kamala HPS each day for 1 month to conduct observational case studies of classroom practices. One day during a lesson taught by Saraswathi in standard (Std) 1, a senior officer of the state education bureaucracy came to inspect the classroom and check the attendance of students. Saraswathi whispered her frustration to me about such processes of monitoring teachers and students:

> See, [officers] just come and see the records, they don’t want to know anything about the children. At least you have come and sat here and you ask questions and see what we do every day. You will get to know more. But they just write something and leave. (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

Sustained in situ research can help one ‘get to know more’ about classroom processes, and in the rural Karnataka school context, it also helped me to distance myself from inspectorial cultures. However, I am mindful not to suggest that I had somehow flattened hierarchic researcher-participant relations.

For example, one teacher, Ramesha, highlighted the authority I held as a researcher as a result of being sanctioned by the state Commissioner for Public Instruction. Ramesha was responding to an interview question about teachers’ responses to implementing the *LC* program. He described how the program, just like my research, had been endorsed by the education department which meant that teachers, as government workers, felt they were not able to actively oppose it.

> Now you’ve come to do a PhD. You’ve come from the Commissioner…If you get a letter from there, and if you come here, we will talk to you! In the same way, they got [permission] from the Department level, so when they come here to adopt this process, we can’t oppose it. (Ramesha *LC* K8)

Ramesha’s comment highlights how the institutional position of teachers as government employees can conflict with teachers’ personal positions. In this tension, we see the limits of the notion of ‘voluntary consent’ that is underscored in many research ethics frameworks; as Ramesha claims, ‘we can’t oppose it’. His comments also serve as an important reminder that my attempts to build respectful relationships with teachers, and to distance myself from the bureaucratic structure, did not dissolve hierarchic research relations.

Indeed, the research process involved continually working with and through the effects of social class and caste positions. In more hopeful moments, I wondered how far my inter-religious inter-ethnic marriage and Australian nationality might destabilise such positions, or at least play them down. There were, however, numerous instances of being confronted by the effects of my upper-caste Hindu background and position as a ‘foreigner’. For example, in one school, a small group of upper-caste teachers appeared to build alliances with me through mobilising ‘shared’ caste discourses. I felt it was very important to find strategies to contest caste identifications that re-inscribed exclusion and hierarchy. An open participation in school life to some degree challenged the performances of caste codes. For instance, an upper-caste teacher noted with surprise my willingness to eat the lunch prepared for students by the school's Scheduled Caste cook; the teacher, like many others, refused to eat food cooked by a person from 'SC' communities. The tension here, and one that I constantly negotiated, was my simultaneous participation in and contestation of social practices in the research setting. I am grateful for the efforts, patience, and generosity of teachers who participated in this study, and in the chapters that follow I hope to show the tensions they too negotiated in their changing school contexts.

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Chapter 3
The Political Project of Child-Centred Education in India

Child-centred reform programs like the two examined in this book are shaped by multiple political agendas. This chapter investigates how the post-colonial educational enterprise has been contested in India and the ways in which child-centred discourses have figured in these projects. Child-centred education is often constructed as an 'innovative' strategy in contemporary development discourse even though intellectuals and political figures in India have long debated similar approaches as part of the expansion of a national education system. It was not until the late 1980s that child-centred education gained traction in official national policy agendas. This chapter shows how child-centred education, while it has not always been a well-articulated priority at the national level, has been re-contextualised in relation to various nationalist, revivalist, and development projects. In particular, I analyse how child-centred education in India has been mobilised in agendas to expand access to and participation in school education and embedded in systems which have also foregrounded performance-based and socially regulative models of schooling.

3.1 Contesting Pedagogy for a Post-colonial India

Pedagogic processes in public education have been long contested by Indian educationalists and policymakers. First published in 1991, Krishna Kumar's (2005) *Political Agenda of Education: a study of colonialist and nationalist ideas* offers important insights into the historical context of curricular and pedagogic modes that became dominant in India's mass education system. Kumar examined how aspects of liberal modernist thought were attractive to Indian thinkers seeking to challenge colonial education during the independence movement. While it was much later that the language of child-centred education became prominent in official education discourses, Kumar's research reveals the social significance of pedagogic reform agendas decades earlier in India's political and economic history.

A. Sriprakash, *Pedagogies for Development: The Politics and Practice of Child-Centred Education in India*, Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects 16,
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We learn from Kumar's work of the colonial legacies of the 'textbook culture', rote-based learning, and moral instruction which continue to be prevalent in Indian schooling. During the colonial period, 'moral programs' of education were established which supported the utilitarian and evangelical projects of the colonial state (Kumar 2005:34). The democratic rhetoric of 'mass' education carried political value, but the school system was not sufficiently expanded and thus remained accessed primarily by upper-class/caste men. Limited access to formal education strengthened the identity of the elite 'educated' upper-caste Indian man positioned as morally superior, English-speaking, and state employable compared to the illiterate masses. The bureaucratic system of educational administration and centralised control over textbooks and examinations devolved educational decision-making from teachers to the state. However, Kumar observed that the older Brahmanical ideals of the teacher's moral authority were not displaced by this structural change to their work: 'the teacher was supposed to possess sacred knowledge which he knew best how to transfer to a student' (Kumar 2005:196). Education was used to maintain the social order of the colonial state through a tightly controlled pedagogy that did not encourage curiosity and questioning in children or seek connections between community and school knowledge.

During the struggle for independence, Indian philosophers and educationalists were faced with questions about how the education system in a post-colonial India would address its past and look to the future of the new nation state. Kumar noted the persuasiveness of 'revivalist' projects of education which continue to be utilised by the political right, often through the construction of a national identity that sets up a distinction between Indian 'spirituality' and Western 'materialism' (Kumar 2005:167). The education philosophies of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) focused simultaneously on the development of a child's personality as well as the spiritual identity of the country, offering a mix of both pedagogic modernism and revivalist nationalism. Vivekananda's spiritual philosophies informed his theory of education as defined as 'the concentration of the mind, not the collecting of facts' (Vivekananda, quoted in Bharathi 2005:40). Aurobindo's educational principles were said to centre on 'the awakening of man *(sic)* as a spiritual being' (Cenkner 1994:162).

The pedagogic visions of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) engaged more directly with the contexts of post-colonial India's industrialisation and were in this sense more prospective. Tagore drew on European traditions of modern humanistic education to write of a liberationist pedagogy centring on the concept of childhood but also to be practised alongside economic activities and modern scientific development. Drawing interest from Western educationalists Dewey and Montessori, Tagore's educational theories proposed an activity-centred curriculum, such that 'the primary function of the teacher is to produce an atmosphere for creative activity' (Cenkner 1994:57). His pedagogic vision drew on assumptions about the curiosity, creativity, and autonomy of the child.

Gandhi's response to colonial education was proposed through his Wardha Scheme in 1937 which involved a national program of *Nai Talim* or 'Basic Education'. He proposed a re-structuring of school knowledge around local craft: a radical break from Brahmanical and colonial systems of education. This model challenged the centralised authority over curriculum and pedagogy by underscoring the capacity of the teacher and the importance of local knowledge. ‘Basic education’ sought to develop the productive capacities of village children in the face of advancing industrialisation. Knowledge was to be produced and assimilated through work. In this way, Gandhi’s ideas resonated with Dewey’s educational theories of a school system that was integrated into social life. His model also drew interest from Italian educationalist Maria Montessori, whose training of teachers in India from 1939 to 1947 had strengthened the influence of her child-centred ideas in the country.[1] Indeed, a number of private primary education institutions have been established in India aligning themselves to the educational theories of Montessori, Aurobindo, or Vivekananda, for example. Schools oriented towards ‘alternative’ and broadly ‘progressive’ pedagogic ideals appeared to be sponsored by the middle and upper classes, but not yet by the state.

The focus on national modernisation continued to shape education discourses in the period leading up to India’s independence from colonial rule. A National Planning Committee (NPC) was formed in 1938 and led by Jawaharlal Nehru with the aim of ‘economic regeneration’ through industrialisation and scientific progress. The NPC included a sub-committee on education which recommended state-funded compulsory primary schooling for all children irrespective of background; the democratic provision of school education was integral to India’s national progress. Nehru envisaged a revitalised primary education system for the masses which drew on an experiment-based pedagogy to promote scientific curiosity. His program of national modernisation was underpinned by an agenda to promote industrial civilisation and scientific advancement. However, the provision of such education to the population remained elusive. As Kumar (2005:190) observed, ‘it could be argued that the government could not afford to revitalize primary education with the meagre resources available to it, but the point remains that mass education did not get priority attention in Nehru’s administration’.

The Constitution of India which came into effect in 1950 – 3 years after India’s independence – directed that the state should provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14.[2] At that time, the national literacy rate was estimated to be 18.33% and just 8.86% for women (GoI 2004). The Gross Enrolment Ratio[3] for the first 5 years of primary school was 42.6 across the country and 24.8

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[1] In 1939, Montessori was invited to India by members of the Theosophical Society. With the outbreak of World War II, she was exiled from Italy and stayed in India until 1947. During this time, Montessori travelled across the country to train teachers in her child-centred methods. The Montessori movement in India saw the establishment of fee-paying private primary and pre-primary institutions accessed by the middle and upper classes.

[2] More recently, the Right to Education Act was passed in 2009, legislating education as a fundamental right for children aged between 6 and 14 years.

[3] The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary education is calculated by expressing the number of children enrolled in primary schools, *regardless of age*, as a percentage of the population of official primary school–aged children. The accuracy of this indicator is contested given the age range of children in schools, particularly the early enrolment of children (cf. Annual Status of Education Report 2008).

for girls. In the decades following independence, in response to the new Indian constitution, the expansion of primary schools took place: in 1951–1961, the number of government-recognised primary schools increased by 120,728. During this period, the Gross Enrolment Ratio across the country for standards 1–8 had a reported increase of 16.6% (GoI 2001). However, it has been argued that little attention was paid to the material and pedagogic conditions that prevailed in schools, such that 'there was no idea or method to make universal elementary education a coherent project' (Kumar 2005:194).

The language of a liberal education appeared conducive, to some extent, to challenging the colonial education system, envisaging a modern industrial society, and reflecting democratic ideals to school the illiterate masses. For example, the *Education Commission* 1964–1966 (commonly known as the Kothari Commission) appointed by the Government of India drew on notions of individual freedoms in order to describe the needs of a 'modern society':

> In a modern society where the rate of change and of the growth of knowledge is very rapid, the educational system must be elastic and dynamic. It must give freedom to its basic units – the individual pupil in a school, the individual teacher among his *(sic)* colleagues, and the individual school (or cluster of schools)… (GoI 1966:398)

However, the pedagogic ideas and social agendas of educationalists such as Gandhi and Tagore prior to Independence did not gain traction as an official national approach to mass education.

3.2 National Policy Discourses on Child-Centred Pedagogy

The emergence of child-centred discourses in official Indian education policy can be dated back to the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986.[4] After a decade of political unrest, slow economic growth, and inadequate government action in the primary education sector, the 1986 National Policy on Education represented a significant move by the government to plan for its constitutional obligation to provide compulsory and free primary education. By this time, the state had expanded primary school facilities and had claimed to have built a primary school within 1 km of more than 90% of rural habitations. According to national census data, in 1981, the government was still faced with national literacy rates of just 43.7%.

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[4] The first National Policy on Education was put forward in 1968 and stated the need for a 'radical restructure' of the education system to achieve 'economic and cultural development', 'national integration' and 'realising the ideals of a socialistic society', but it was thin on the details of its approach towards pedagogy (GoI 1968). The second National Policy on Education was approved by Parliament in May 1986, but was revised in 1992; it is thus known as the *National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992).* In this chapter, I examine and refer to the revised NPE 1986 document from 1992.

The national Gross Enrolment Ratio had risen to 73.8% for standards 1–5, but the national average retention rate after standard 5 stood at only about 60%.

The NPE 1986 set out a plan to achieve universal access, enrolment, and retention in primary education, and ‘a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning’ (GoI 1992:14). The policy and its subsequent Program of Action recommended schemes such as Operation Blackboard to provide minimal resources to schools, and the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) for teacher education. Parallel systems of education were introduced in the form of selective state schools (*Navodaya Vidyalayas*) and of non-formal education programs for ‘school drop-outs, for children from habitations without schools, working children and girls who cannot attend whole-day schools’ (GoI 1992:18).[5]

Suggestive of the complexity of its political vision, the 1986 National Policy on Education conceptualised the ‘essence and role of education’ (GoI 1992:3) in nationalist, spiritual, cultural, and economic terms. Consider, for example, the following excerpt:

> In our national perception education is essentially for all. This is fundamental to our all-round development, material and spiritual.
>
> Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit – thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution.
>
> Education develops manpower *(sic)* for different levels of the economy. It is also the substrate on which research and development flourish, being the ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance.
>
> In sum, Education is a unique investment in the present and the future. This cardinal principle is the key to the National Policy on Education. (GoI 1992:3–4)

The NPE recommended a ‘child-centred approach’ to education as part of its multifarious political vision.

> A warm, welcoming and encouraging approach, in which all concerned share a solicitude for the needs of the child, is the best motivation for the child to attend school and learn. A child-centred and activity-based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. First generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction. As the child grows, the component of cognitive learning will be increased and skills organised through practice. The policy of non-detention at the primary stage will be retained, making evaluation as disaggregated as feasible. Corporal

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[5] Sadgopal (2006) provided a critical analysis of the failure of the NPE 1986 to carry forward policies of a common school system, which were recommended by the Education Commission 1964–1966 and also accepted in the first NPE of 1968. He argued that this push for non-formal education and the selective *Navodaya Vidyalayas* ‘provided the foundation for institutionalising a range of parallel layers of low quality streams of educational facilities for different social segments’ (Sadgopal 2006:11).

> punishment will be firmly excluded from the educational system and school timings as well as vacations adjusted to the convenience of children. (GoI 1992:14)

Here, the reference to a ‘warm, welcoming and encouraging approach’ gestured towards the significance of the child’s affective needs. The policy associated the need to foster ‘solicitude’ for the child with improving attendance and learning in schools. While it was not explained in detail, this child-centred approach involved concepts of ‘learning by doing’ through a recommended ‘activity-based process’. The process of learning was emphasised, for example, through ‘disaggregated’ evaluation systems promoting that continuous forms of assessment replace annual examinations. The policy suggested that control over the pacing of learning should be accorded to the child, and interestingly this was linked specifically to ‘first-generation learners’ who should also be able to access ‘supplementary remedial instruction’.

The 1986 NPE framework in effect reconstructed the image of the child as a learner. The ‘policy of non-detention’ between standards was to allow for the individual academic progress of each child. The denunciation of corporal punishment in the classroom challenged the norms of authoritarian teacher–student relationships. The ‘convenience’ of the child was to be taken in consideration in terms of school timing and vacations, presumably referring to the need for the school system to adapt to the seasonal and local contexts of children’s lives. In these ways and more, this model of child-centred education presented a new culture of teaching and learning in Indian primary schools.

The NPE 1986 document did not provide much elaboration on the pedagogic theories or epistemological principles behind its child-centred ideals. The policy did, however, make claims to the social benefits of child-centred education. Such pedagogic approaches intended to address school participation, increase attendance, and meet the needs of first-generation learners. In these ways, the NPE re-contextualised child-centred pedagogy as a strategy for educating the masses. We begin to see how child-centred education, no longer the domain of the middle/upper classes, was to promise a democratic provision of mass education.

These early ideas for child-centred education were taken up in the 1998 National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education produced by the National Council for Educational Research and Training. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), the first of three frameworks produced in the next 10 years, emerged from NPE 1986 recommendations to establish guiding principles for a national system of education. As will be discussed, a more detailed picture of the state’s vision for child-centred education was presented.

At the centre of the NCF’s recommendations was a re-constructed, individualised view of the learner:

> For the development of the pupil’s personality, it is imperative that he/she is placed at the centre of curriculum planning and transaction. His/her individuality and dignity must be respected. His/her needs, interests, aptitudes and abilities are to be adequately taken note of. Well designed learning experiences, in and outside the school, are tools by which a pupil is enabled to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values conducive to the actualisation of his/her potentialities. (NCF 1998:8)

We see here how the National Curriculum Framework mobilised child-centred discourses to foreground the student's 'personality', 'individuality', 'dignity', and 'interests'. Humanistic notions underpinned the pedagogic identity of the learner and were associated with the acquisition of 'knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values', serving both instrumental and socially regulative functions. The framework then described how teaching should take place through this model:

> A child-centred approach to education with the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process of pupils is considered to be the key to the new strategy in the transaction of the curriculum. Appropriate methods and techniques which would facilitate interactive process of teaching and learning need to be evolved for this purpose. This implies replacement of the existing teaching methods which are predominantly based on rote learning, lectures and reproduction of information by interactive modes of teaching which would focus on 'learning' and which would stimulate curiosity and independent thinking, develop problem solving skills, promote planning and execution of projects and self-learning. (NCF 1998:8)

Once again, the concept of 'learning by doing' was suggested through 'interactive modes of teaching'. A child-centred approach was used to challenge the 'existing' methods of teaching (for example, 'rote learning'). The 'process' of learning was emphasised over the reproduction of information, an emphasis which greatly expanded the expected outcomes of schooling for learners. In this model, 'curiosity', 'independent thinking', 'problem solving', and 'self-learning' were some of the expectations placed on learners. The pedagogic expectations on teachers were also expanded, as they were constructed as 'facilitators' of learning, needing to respond to each child's 'needs, interests, aptitudes, and abilities'. The role of teachers in delivering this pedagogy was further outlined as follows:

> The teacher's role will be one of helping the pupil to develop skills in collecting information, their verification and evaluation for further processing and structuring for drawing inferences. He/she will be required to be not only an instructor but a resource person for information search and analysis. He/she will be required to devise diverse ways of learning unique to different areas of study which would help the pupil in developing self-confidence and in learning how to learn. (NCF 1998:8)

Herein the multiple demands of the child-centred pedagogy on the teacher were revealed. The teacher was positioned as a 'resource person' as well as an 'instructor'. The model required the teacher to have a repertoire of pedagogic strategies that were responsive to each child's learning and 'self-confidence'. Thus, teachers were expected to reshape their pedagogies using a significantly different, and complex, set of theoretical assumptions.

Child-centred ideals significantly expanded the desired pedagogic outcomes of schooling, but the introduction of a strong normative syllabus framework continued to tightly structure students' expected learning goals. The NPE 1986 recommended a syllabus structure that reflected grade-related goals: 'minimum levels of learning will be laid down for each stage of education' (GoI 1992:6). A national syllabus titled *Minimum Levels of Learning at Primary Stage* (MLL) was published in 1991 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The MLL was presented as a 'rational criteria' for 'curricula inputs' and expected 'learning outcomes' for the learning areas of Language, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies for standards 1–5 (GoI 1991:5).[6] The MLL also directed schools to 'imbibe certain basic values', namely regularity and punctuality, cleanliness, industriousness, diligence, sense of duty and service, equality, cooperation, a sense of responsibility, truthfulness, and national identity (GoI 1991:61).

The syllabus outlined key 'competencies' for students to achieve in a set sequence, according to class standards for each of the three learning areas. This outline sets out a detailed and tight structure for teachers who were, somewhat paradoxically, also required to take up a weaker-framed, child-centred pedagogy. The expected outcomes of schooling remained strongly framed by grade- and subject-based norms about knowledge acquisition. To illustrate the level of detail provided by the MLL, Table 3.1 presents the MLL 'competencies' for the language syllabus for standards 1 and 2.

The MLL structure was positioned as a response to the 'quality issue' in Indian primary education: it sought to provide 'direction' and 'accountability' in schools, to achieve the 'real sense' of quality as a measure of students' performance outputs (GoI 1991:6). The standardised syllabus structure was seen as part and parcel of the equality concerns that were raised in the NPE 1986:

> The need to lay down Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) emerges from the basic concern that irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, *all children* must be given access to education of a comparable standard. (GoI 1991:5, emphasis added)

However, the MLL structure did not easily cohere with the ideas of child-centred education which, as discussed above, had also been understood with relation to a democratic provision of education. The instrumentalist orientation of the MLL resonated with the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s, an important backdrop to the shifting priorities of education towards market-oriented discourses (cf. Jeffery 2005). Reflecting on the new economic regimes that had given currency to the normative structure of the MLL, Kumar argued:

> Although 'child-centred' education has been retained as a slogan, the instrumentalist ideology is being actively used to undermine the concept of childhood and its humanistic underpinnings recognised in the Indian constitution. (Kumar 2004a:120)

An uneasy combination of instrumentalist and progressive educational discourses begins to emerge in the 'official' recontextualising field of national education policy.

Indeed, in the years after the NPE 1986, strategies for improving Indian primary education continued to be debated by educationalists, particularly concerning the

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[6] Environmental studies cluster disciplines of science and social studies.

Table 3.1 MLL competencies for language learning, Stds 1 and 2

Competency	Std 1	Std 2
Listening	Listen with understanding to simple, familiar and popular rhymes, poems and tales	Listen with understanding to simple but unfamiliar poems, songs and stories
	Understand conversation and dialogues in familiar situations	Understand conversation and dialogue in familiar situations
	Understand oral requests and simple instructions in familiar situations	Understand oral requests, instructions, commands and questions in familiar situations
Speaking	Repeat simple sentences correctly	Pronounce all sounds of the language
	Recite simple rhymes, poems and songs in a group with gestures and actions	Recite poems and songs in a group and individually
	Answer simple questions requiring yes/no answers	Answer simple questions requiring full answers
	Ask simple questions	Seek information about familiar things
Reading	Recognize common letters of alphabet in combination and singly	Recognize infrequent letters and conjunct letters
	Read large print of handwriting on blackboards, flashcards, etc.	Read large and small prints
	Read aloud simple known words (of generally not more than three syllables)	Read aloud rhymes, poems, songs and simple stories
Writing	Copy consonants, vowels, matras[a] and conjunct letters	Copy words and sentences
	Write (from dictation) consonants, vowels, matras, and conjunct letters	Take simple dictation of known words
	Write simple familiar words and simple sentences	Write simple guided descriptive sentences
Comprehension of ideas (through listening and reading)	Recall simple information given in a short spoken text	Recall sequence of events in a short spoken or written text
	After listening be able to answer questions of 'who', 'when' and 'where'	After listening be able to answer questions of 'what' and 'how'
Functional grammar	Become aware of similarities between words on the basis of word ending	Become aware of similarities between words on the basis of word beginning, word ending, and word roots (prefixes, suffixes and word stems)
Self-learning	Be able to use simple picture glossary where available	Be able to use simple picture encyclopaedia where available
Language use	Understand and use simple polite formulas	Speak politely and be attentive while listening
Vocabulary control	Be able to acquire reading comprehension vocabulary of approx. 1,500 words	Be able to acquire reading comprehension vocabulary of approx. 2,000 words

Extract from Minimum Levels of Learning at Primary Stage (GoI 1991:14–17)

[a] *Matra* signs change a consonant's vowel-sound when attached to a consonant letter

'burden' or 'load' of rigid textbook-based instruction on students. The NPE 1986 follow-up Program of Action (1992) outlined the issue:

> The whole question of curriculum load is a complex one and there are no simple solutions. It has to be tackled in a comprehensive way and would include curricular reform, examination reform, better pedagogical practices and teacher training. (GoI 1992)

The Ministry of Human Resource Development appointed what came to be known as the Yash Pal Committee to enquire into the matter of 'curriculum load'.[7] The report of the Committee, *Learning Without Burden* (GoI 1993), presented a wide-ranging discussion about the dominant mode of Indian primary education including the 'joyless learning' of prescribed syllabi and dense textbooks; an entrenched examination system focused on the reproduction of information; the absence of exploratory thinking caused by heavily information-laden textbooks; the alienation of children through the distance between the child's everyday life and textbook content; and the absence of children's perspectives or interpretations though centrally predetermined syllabi.

The report highlighted the need to centre the child in school processes and rethink the relationship between the child and school knowledge. Issues of student retention were to be addressed through a renewed focus on 'elements of joy and inquiry' (GoI 1993:50) in classroom processes.

> The problem of high drop-out rate, which has rightly pre-occupied our policy-makers for a long time, has one of its origins in the curriculum scenario we have portrayed. (GoI 1993:50)

Among the recommendations of the *Learning Without Burden* report were proposals for decentralised processes of curriculum reform, an increased involvement of teachers in textbook preparation, reduced teacher–pupil ratios of 1:30 from the existing official (but rarely met) ratios of 1:40, and systemic reforms of examinations. The report also ratified a child-centred approach that would create new pedagogic expectations upon both the student and teacher. This included shifting the teacher's role from an authoritarian instructor or venerated '*guru*' to a 'facilitator' of learning. Value was placed on children's experience and understanding of their environments, repositioning the child as an active learner, with their affective needs underscored through the language of 'joy'.

However, these pedagogic roles for teachers did not easily cohere with persisting conditions of limited teacher autonomy which positioned teachers as bureaucratic functionaries or 'meek dictators' in the classroom (Kumar 2005). Furthermore, new pedagogic expectations placed on students were seen to clash with the dominant construction of the ‘uneducated’ passive learner. Reflecting on the colonial and nationalist legacies of school education, Kumar (2005:48) argued:

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[7] The Yash Pal Committee was officially called the 'National Advisory Committee appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development'.

> …modernist child-centred thought always met with hostility or indifference. Ideas such as the practice of inquiry within one’s milieu, and the application of knowledge to solve daily problems were alien to the agenda of moral upliftment which had a central place in both imperialist and nationalist discourses.

As a result of new political priorities, the *Learning Without Burden* report did not lead to changes in curriculum and textbook development in the way that had been recommended. Rather, child-centred ideals were reworked and recontextualised by Hindu nationalist agendas that had gained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1998, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with its Hindu revivalist ideologies, was elected to national power. The subsequent rewriting of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2000 saw an emphasis on ‘saffronised’ (right-winged Hindu-centric) visions of Indian history and society, and discourses of ‘values education’.

The National Curriculum Framework 2000 endorsed by the BJP recontextualised child-centred ideals as part of a Hindu nationalist political objective. The all-round development of the student’s ‘personality’ involved ‘personal, social, national, moral and spiritual values’ (NCF 2000:3), in accordance with the NCF’s new educational objectives.

> General objectives of education lay emphasis on developing the *learners’ personality* in all respects and realising the national goals of development. The focus has therefore been on the following:
>
> - Appreciation for the need of a balanced synthesis between the change oriented technologies and the continuity of the country’s traditions and heritage.
> - Understanding of the positive and negative impact of the processes of globalisation and liberalisation in the context of the country.
> - A deep sense of patriotism and nationalism tempered with the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.[8]
> - Qualities clustered around the personal, social, national, moral and spiritual values that make a person humane and socially effective, giving meaning and direction to life.
> - Qualities and characteristics necessary for self learning, self directed learning and life long learning leading to the creation of a learning society.
> - Emphasis on the ‘learner-centred approach’ commensurate with the physical, mental, social and emotional development of the learners in relevant age groups. In this context, the shift from the traditional Piagetian model of the ‘child’s development’ to the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ of the learner assumes great importance.
>
> (NCF 2000:3–4, emphasis added)

In this excerpt is evident how notions of child-centred (or here, ‘learner-centred’) education were embedded in revivalist discourses of nationalism and religious moralism. The framework drew on references to the psychology of learning (Piagetian and

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[8] *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (‘the world is our family’) is a Hindu philosophy of local and global peace that has been appropriated by the Hindu nationalist BJP.

Vygotskyian theories of learning), but there was little elaboration of these ideas. The construction of the individualised and responsibilised learner (cf. Kelly 2010) through notions of 'self-directed' and 'lifelong' learning was somewhat similar to the earlier Curriculum Framework in 1998. However, the moral and nationalist agendas of education were made explicit in the NCF 2000 (for example, in the notion of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*), and child-centred ideals were re-shaped as strategies of realising the 'national goals of development'.

Kumar (2004b) argued that the NCF 2000 turned the earlier thinking on child-centred teaching (such as the recommendations of the 1993 *Learning Without Burden* report) into mere rhetoric to bolster ideologically driven textbook reforms. In this context, Kumar argued, the principles of child-centred ideals, even at the level of policy, 'proved too subtle for the system to absorb' (2004b:20). Nevertheless, the curriculum framework maintained some policy interest in child-centred pedagogy, albeit with reinterpreted social goals. As I discuss below, concurrent international development agendas and mandates played a significant part in influencing India's continued reworking of child-centred education.

3.3 Child-Centred Education and the Development Paradigm

Weaving through internal education debates in India were pressures from international development discourses and human rights agendas for the universalisation of primary education. India participated in the 1990 World Conference on Education For All (EFA), convened in Jomtien, Thailand, by the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, in which targets were set for the implementation of universal primary education by the end of the decade. India became signatory to the Jomtien Declaration which established the nation's concurrence with global EFA objectives. Some Indian educationalists have argued that this was a turning point for how national agendas were set for primary education (cf. Sadgopal 2006). Indeed, the 1990s saw significant national planning for the universalisation of elementary education and the emergence of new conditions for global development interests and public–private partnerships in India's primary education system. The investments and agendas of international donor agencies visibly shaped educational priorities through the establishment of a number of time-bound, target-driven intervention programs.

As part of the structural adjustment program of the Indian economy, with funding from the World Bank, European Community, UNICEF, and the UK and Dutch governments, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) was launched in 1994 and ran until 2001. Under a decentralised (district-level) system, the DPEP oversaw much planning and activity in education development across the country including the development of facilities and infrastructure for schools, the establishment of cluster-level resource centres, and the delivery of in-service teacher training. Arguably, the decentralised approach of the DPEP helped emphasise the local/national interests of the program in the face of its external funding and mandates (cf. Kumar et al. 2001). Through the DPEP, child-centred ideals expressed in national policy were able to take programmatic form. In the state of Karnataka, the DPEP oversaw extensive in-service teacher-training 'packages' for its numerous pedagogic programs such as *Keli-Kali* (radio-broadcasted lessons), *Chaitanya* (activity-based teaching), and *Nali Kali* (the 'joyful learning' approach analysed in this book). Many of the programs initiated under the DPEP, *Nali Kali* included, have been retained in various forms by the government's current umbrella program for education planning established in 2001, the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.*

The objectives of the DPEP were to address 'enrolment, dropout rates and learning achievement among gender and other social groups' (GoI 1995:5), as an explicit response to international education development agendas. Child-centred ideas were utilised for the DPEP goals of 'improving the quality of teaching and making learning a joyful experience for students' (GoI 1998a:23). The 'pedagogical innovations' of the DPEP were positioned as 'little short of a renaissance' in Indian education development (GoI 1998a:24). Yet, DPEP documentation concerning school reforms skirted over the principles and processes of proposed pedagogic approaches and their implications for teachers and students. Indeed, consideration of school processes were notably absent or seen largely as matters of infrastructural concerns. For example, the government report *Three Years of DPEP: Assessment and Challenges* (GoI 1998b) outlined national planning and activity concerning school access and retention. New textbooks and educational materials were presented as an 'incentive' for improved access and retention, and 'teacher recruitment and deployment' was part of 'infrastructural support' (GoI 1998b:10). Kumar et al. (2001) critiqued the DPEP as constructing education as 'a technical input, which can be put in place with the help of enhanced resources acquired through external borrowing' (Kumar et al. 2001:562).

The DPEP's new pedagogic packages that teachers received radically challenged the professional and pedagogic expectations of their work. The bureaucratic and social conditions that governed the teaching profession were given little attention, and the teacher's role in reshaping pedagogic ideas was largely overlooked. For example, matters of pedagogy were conceptualised in terms of textbook renewal in the DPEP documentation. Despite the significant assumptions made about teachers' delivery of the new pedagogy (for example, that they would support 'bias-free', 'attractive', 'activity-based' learning), there was a notable absence of teachers' perspectives and practices, and lack of attention to the conditions that shaped their work. Simply presented as a list in DPEP documentation, the textbook reforms were expected to:

- facilitate a two-way interaction between teacher and child and promote learning
- promote self and group learning
- be child-centred, activity-based
- be bias free (gender, tribal, social and economic groups etc.)
- be attractive and interesting
- be related to children's context
- avoid information overload

(GoI 1998b:22)

This textbook-focused concept of pedagogic renewal left untouched the multifaceted, shifting relationships between the teacher, the child, and school knowledge.

The complexity of classroom interactions and processes, the mediation of local and school knowledge, and the social dynamics of age, gender, class, and caste were made invisible by static notions of 'quality' textbooks. While child-centred pedagogy was referenced in DPEP documentation, its principles hung uncertainly and thus possessed only rhetorical value.

To reiterate, child-centred pedagogy in DPEP was understood through the context of the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), the national syllabus structure produced in response to the National Policy on Education 1986. The DPEP push for pedagogic innovation involved 'developing activity-oriented teaching-learning material, including textbooks that would help in achieving MLLs' (GoI 1998a:24). The MLL structure continues to guide teachers' work. As I illustrate through the analysis of the *Nali Kali* program in Chapter 4, the MLL produces strong subject boundaries and tightly controls the transmission of knowledge – pedagogic principles which do not easily cohere with the aims and theoretical assumptions of child-centred education. Dhankar (2003:16) has argued that the MLL framework used in DPEP pedagogic reform was 'antagonistic' to the concurrent interest in child-centred ideals.

Although the DPEP documentation related 'joyful, activity-based, child-centred' classroom processes to 'quality improvement' (GoI 1998a:23), the underlying assumptions and contextual considerations about learners, communities, teachers, and the aims of education in this assortment of approaches were in effect underdeveloped. Dhankar (2003:9) suggested that the precedence of managerial rationales in classroom organisation has been indicative of the absence of a theoretically grounded notion of pedagogy in DPEP literature; 'pedagogical considerations are only grafted onto it'. Dhankar drew on the example of the DPEP push for 'multi-grade' teaching in which the rhetoric of mixed-age group-based learning was used as a strategy by which to deal with teacher shortages.

Indeed, an unexplicated link was established in DPEP documentation between a constellation of pedagogic approaches ('child-centred', 'activity-based', 'joyful-learning') and the 'better learning achievement' of children (GoI 1998b:18). Such amorphous notions, together with the tightly structured MLL, had ambiguous implications for teachers' work and school processes. In spite of this vagueness, one of the DPEP goals was explicitly to foster 'a clear pedagogic vision of an active, child-centred classroom' (GoI 1998a:24). The DPEP literature reveals how, during this period, pedagogy was under-theorised and over-simplified by the state and external agencies despite being positioned as central to pressing agendas for 'quality' education for all.

3.4 Re-examining Pedagogy

Child-centred pedagogy, seemingly the state's desired approach for education development, needed much clearer articulation in 'official' policy discourses. Child-centred education in DPEP documentation was emphasised through axiologically charged statements rather than close examination of the processes and conditions of pedagogic change. As Sarangapani (2007:241) noted:

> The District Primary Education Project compelled primary school educators to engage with the idea of 'child-centred', but unfortunately this term did not do enough for the child's learning. Depending heavily on slogans to explicate itself, it seemed to draw more attention to the emotional and affective requirements of the child rather than the 'epistemic' dimension of the adult–child interaction.

In this context, child-centred pedagogy, its principles and its role in education development, needed to be closely re-examined. An effort towards re-examination was the 2005 revision of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), in which the social agendas of school education were reframed. The NCF 2005 was produced after a change in central government leadership in 2004 from the Hindu-right Bharatiya Janata Party to the Indian National Congress. It thus presented the state's revision of education ideals with respect to new political interests. The NCF 2005 was seen by its proponents to be 'a historic step of re-establishing the close relationship between school and society and the central role of education in enabling social transformation' (Batra 2006:92).

As a departure from the revivalist notions put forward in the previous NCF 2000 document, in forming its agenda, the NCF 2005 emphasised the constitutional visions of India as a 'secular, egalitarian and pluralistic society' (NCF 2005:vii). The re-writing of the framework involved widespread processes of national consultation with officials, academics, teacher practitioners, and civil society representatives. Reflecting on the debates raised in the 1993 *Learning Without Burden* report, the NCF 2005 engaged with structural and philosophical issues of curriculum reform such as the social context of education, learning environments and knowledge construction, learners and learning processes, teacher education, examination reform, and education governance.

The NCF 2005 set out its guiding principles of curriculum reform as:

- connecting knowledge to life outside the school,
- ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods,
- enriching the curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook centric,
- making examinations more flexible and integrated into classroom life, and
- nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

(NCF 2005:5)

Reflecting these principles, the second chapter of the NCF 2005 focused on the nature of 'learning and knowledge' and set out a constructivist perspective on learning processes. The document described the need to 'engage in detail with the underpinnings and implications of "child-centred" education' (NCF 2005:13). Here, the NCF 2005 recontextualised child-centred theories of learning for a secular, egalitarian political agenda. The child was once again positioned as an 'active learner', and this time the NCF foregrounded processes of knowledge construction rather than the affective and moralistic dimensions of pedagogy that had dominated earlier official discourses (for example, emphases on 'joyful' learning and moral values).

In the NCF 2005 conceptualisation of child-centred pedagogy, teachers were to consider theories of psychological development as well as students' 'interests', 'characteristics', and 'needs'.

> Child-centred' pedagogy means giving primacy to children's experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy requires us to plan learning in keeping with children's psychological development and interests. The learning plans therefore must respond to physical, cultural and social preferences within the wide diversity of characteristics and needs. (NCF 2005:13)

The NCF 2005 document elaborated the aims and features of the child-centred pedagogy it envisaged. Child-centred education was to create 'active' and 'creative' students who were able to relate to the world in 'real' ways. The aim was to refocus education discourses that had been earlier preoccupied with the moral 'socialisation of children'.

> Our school pedagogic practices, learning tasks, and the texts we create for learners tend to focus on the socialisation of children and on the 'receptive' features of children's learning. Instead, we need to nurture and build on their active and creative capabilities – their inherent interest in making meaning, in relating to the world in 'real' ways through acting on it and creating, and in relating to other humans. Learning is active and social in its character. Frequently, the notions of 'good student' that are promoted emphasise obedience to the teacher, moral character, and acceptance of the teacher's words as 'authoritative' knowledge. (NCF 2005:13)

The NCF 2005 explicitly recognised learning as 'active and social'. It sought to weaken boundaries around the selection and transmission of knowledge and to emphasise the relationalities of school-worlds. The NCF 2005 offered greater elaboration of its pedagogic aims and approaches compared to previous child-centred policy statements which tended to be thin on detail, and marked an important shift in the way pedagogy was articulated in the official domain of Indian education. A hopeful reading would identify the NCF 2005 as opening up new possibilities for re-visioning the role of teachers in Indian schools: from de-professionalised 'deliverers' of the syllabus, to educators critically engaging with processes of teaching.

This chapter has shown how child-centred ideas have been recontextualised in policy documentation through different political agendas over the last three decades. While these ideas were not always elaborated on, they were positioned as a desired approach to national development. The liberal orientation of child-centred pedagogies has been coupled with normative and instrumental structures of learning (i.e. the MLL), as well as with revivalist ideologies and moral agendas of education. Child-centred education was positioned as relevant to an over-arching concern for the democratic provision of schooling, but in each iteration it was embedded within a system that has also legitimised performance-based and moral regulative models of education.

Child-centred classroom reforms are shaped in this complex policy terrain, where pedagogic practices are likely to be produced with 'a pedagogic pallet *(sic)* where mixes can take place' (Bernstein 2000:56). How can child-centred principles in 'official' policy discourses take shape in school contexts? What are the implications of such ideals for teachers' work, for students' learning, for classroom practices, and for a democratic education system? I turn now to the state-context of Karnataka and discuss these questions in relation to two child-centred pedagogic reform programs, *Nali Kali* and *LC*, as implemented in rural primary schools.

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Chapter 4
Education Reform in Karnataka: Two Pedagogies for Development

This chapter examines two child-centred pedagogic reforms, *Nali Kali* and *LC,* implemented in rural primary schools of Karnataka. I discuss the education context of Karnataka and examine state-level policy agendas for primary education in which the two reforms were located. The central (national) government and state governments in India have concurrent responsibilities for education planning; policies and specific initiatives are often determined by the central government, with expenditure and administrative processes in the hands of state departments. However, states like Karnataka also put forward region-specific positions on education which have produced multiple strands of 'official' education discourse. As Jeffery (2005:23) reflected, education planning in India can be 'entangled in wider political projects, internal as well as global, that are often controversial or contradictory'.

This chapter is organised into two parts. Having illuminated the multiple political agendas framing child-centred education at the national level (see Chapter 3), I begin by exploring the struggle over pedagogic renewal in the state context of Karnataka. In particular, I show the ways in which child-centred reforms like *Nali Kali* and *LC* are enmeshed in explicit performance-oriented agendas at the state level. I then examine the *Nali Kali* and *LC* programs closely to illustrate how child-centred ideals can be re-contextualised within such systems. Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing (see Chapter 2) are used to identify the relative strengths of power and control which are distributed through the *ideals* of the two pedagogies. I discuss the differences between the two reforms, their pull towards competence pedagogic models, and the mixes of modalities within each of their proposed programs. My overall aim is to provide a detailed picture of the political contexts, intended processes, and expected outcomes of the two reforms, allowing my readers to see, in the subsequent chapters of this book, how teachers interpret and work with these ideals in their rural classroom contexts.

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4.1 State Education Agendas

Karnataka has had a highly visible role in India's economic liberalisation since the 1990s, due largely to the rapid development of its technology and consumer industries and private educational institutions, particularly in the metropolitan centres of the state. However, uneven ruptures of economic development across the state have led to a struggle over equity agendas in education arenas. State government perspectives on Education For All (EFA) appear to be increasingly entangled with Karnataka's global technological outlook, as well as with the multiple political interests articulated in national policy discourses.

In 2001, the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (*SSA*) was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development as a national framework for state-level planning towards the universalisation of elementary education. The Government of Karnataka set optimistic targets for universal access to elementary education by 2007 and universal enrolment and retention in elementary education by 2010, earlier than targets set at the national level (GoK 2006a:10). The *SSA* took over many of the activities of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) which had run from 1994 (see Chapter 3). For example, *SSA* Karnataka continued to implement in-service teacher training programs like *Shikshanadalli Rangakale* (using drama in teaching), *Chaitanya Tarani* (preparation of teaching aids), and the *Nali Kali* 'joyful learning' approach examined in this study.[1]

The Government of Karnataka has described many of its educational projects as building on the global, technologically advanced position of the state. As part of this agenda, private institutions and external agencies have played a prominent role in the planning, financing, and delivery of primary education programs within the state sector. Their activities have not gone without critique. For example, Sarangapani and Vasavi (2003:3407) highlight concerns about the weakening role of the state, explaining that the danger of '"professional", moneyed agencies working so closely with the government is that they may substitute for genuine democratic processes and structures'. Indeed, 'public–private partnerships' are deeply embedded in state education mechanisms: in 2002, the Policy Planning Unit in the Karnataka Department for Public Instruction established a formal collaboration (with World Bank financial assistance) with the Azim Premji Foundation – a not-for-profit organisation founded by the chairman of one of India's largest software companies.

Some of the programs in government primary education that highlight the state's active partnerships and its vision for technologically enhanced, globally oriented education include:

- The EduSat program: A collaboration between *SSA*-Karnataka and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), through which lessons are broadcast into classrooms for schools in so-called 'backward' areas. The state government

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[1] In Karnataka, government primary teachers were expected to undertake 20 days per year of in-service training in order to be 'oriented' towards 'quality teaching' (GoK 2006b:62).

publication *Quality Initiatives in Education* (2006) claimed that one of the specific objectives of this program is that 'in large classes, satellite TV can actually take the place of a good teacher' (GoK 2006b:80).
- Computers and computer education: The expanding provision of computers in government higher primary schools sponsored by the Azim Premji Foundation. This program has been described as giving students opportunities to 'catch up with emerging trends' in the context of Karnataka's 'worldwide reputation for being in the van guard *(sic)* of Information Technology' (GoK 2006b:70).
- English language education: The introduction of English as a second language from the first grade across all government schools in 2007 has been positioned as a response to 'community demands' and 'market needs' in 'the context of a global scenario' (GoK 2007b:3).

These initiatives could be seen to be part of a well-intentioned vision to include government primary school students, mostly children of the poor, in Karnataka's narratives of modernisation and economic development. How do such visions work with and through the state's concurrent sponsorship of child-centred education? Child-centred ideals foreground the child and their environment, yet in some of the examples above, the child needs to 'catch up' to a starkly different world, arguably one in which preferred citizenship is determined by the potential of (globally) marketable skills. Aihwa Ong (2006) suggests that such market-oriented models of citizenship can intensify existing social inequalities. To what extent does the focus on 'catching up' to a 'global scenario' devalue the local knowledge of the rural student and her environment, or reinscribe deficit constructions of children of the poor? The increased technological interventions in primary education also sought to change the nature and relevance of teachers' work. This is explicit in the above example of the EduSat program proposing that 'satellite TV can actually take the place of a good teacher' (GoK 2006b:80). Child-centred programs can make significant demands on teachers, yet in this case, the teacher is rendered less relevant in classrooms.

These examples highlight the uneasy relationship between child-centred education and the state's other development strategies. This was nowhere more apparent than in the establishment of standardised student assessment practices in 2005 by the Karnataka School Quality Assessment Organisation (KSQAO). The KSQAO was constituted by the Government of Karnataka with Word Bank funding in order to 'generate reliable information on the performance of elementary schools' (GoK 2006c:1). It conducted externally written and administered tests for standards 2, 5, and 7 in subject areas of Kannada (language), mathematics, social science, and science. The objectives of the KSQAO testing were to assess, record, and report on the 'learning outcomes of students in selected competencies of different subjects prescribed for the class by using universally accepted scientific methods' (ibid.:3). Over 1.2 million students have been tested in government and government-aided primary schools across Karnataka each year since 2005.

The KSQAO testing foregrounds an instrumentalist view of education in an already competitive system. The KSQAO was very much part of the neoliberal turn in Indian education which cast education ‘quality’ in managerial and performance-based terms. As Kumar (2004a) critiqued:

> It is in keeping with the ethos of recent years that educational quality has been defined increasingly in terms of technical and managerial efficiency, without reference to philosophically defensible aims. Educational goals are being identified as behavioural outcomes to be ensured by teachers as end points of bureaucratically pursued routines. (Kumar 2004a:119)

The performance-based ‘outputs’ of education ‘quality’ assumed in the KSQAO relied on a tight classification and framing over the evaluative criteria of students, seemingly at odds with the constructivist learning principles envisaged in the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (see Chapter 3).

The Government of Karnataka’s decidedly neoliberal approach to education development was rearticulated in the 2007 Perspective Plan for Education in Karnataka. The Perspective Plan was part of a political push for a state-specific vision on education (from pre-primary through to pre-university) in which education reform was to serve the Karnataka’s economic and scientific development. The opening statements of the document located its agendas within the changing economic contexts of Karnataka, explicitly presenting a human capital perspective of education.

> A sound education policy forms the bed rock *(sic)* of all fields of national development. Enhancement of education levels has certainly a bearing on productivity, incomes, employment and finally adaptation of science and technology which will in turn enhance the quality of life. Improvement in literacy and school enrolment (especially among girls) is closely correlated with the delayed on set *(sic)* of marriage and child birth, improved mortality and reduction in family size.
> […]
> Apart from the fundamental issues of lack of delivery of quality and universal learning, it is also observed that the education system in Karnataka is faced with rising expectations of the people on one hand and the pressures of the economy undergoing structural reforms on the other. (GoK 2007a:5)

The perceived ‘rising expectations of the people’ in Karnataka were used to support an aggressive economic agenda concerning five priorities for the government education sector. These were listed in the Perspective Plan as:

> 1. The education system should guarantee equitable access to high quality education, formal and non-formal, that would equip the people with knowledge and skills necessary for economic growth.
> 2. The system should be based on a world class curriculum offering global knowledge and enable the state to compete in an international knowledge based economy.
> 3. At the same time the system should cater to the needs of average and below average children who may not like to pursue education after a certain stage.
> 4. Hence the system should build on peoples’ participation and institutional structures which are accountable to the stake holders.
> 5. There is also greater need for organisation through strategic partnership between public and private institutions.
>
> (GoK 2007a:11)

We can see in this excerpt how the market-driven agenda of the Perspective Plan was fraught with assumptions about an ‘international knowledge-based economy’, the need for greater private investments in education, and the obligation to cater for so-called ‘average or below average’ children. The report went on to recommend managerial technologies such as performance-based pay for teachers and the use of standardised evaluation and ranking of schools. Disturbingly, the participation of students in formal education was positioned as an individual decision (those who ‘may not like to pursue education’) owing to their supposed academic mediocrity or failings. Notions of an ‘equitable’ education were embedded in discourses of competition and economic advancement, making invisible the social disadvantage and marginalisation of the ‘average and below average’ children. As Jeffery (2005) argues, Indian neoliberal agendas produce discourses of the ‘marketable’ student through which ‘failure and achievement alike are individualised – although the profiles of the successful and the unsuccessful largely reflect the fracture lines of previous privilege, of wealth, language facility, and social contacts’ (Jeffery 2005:20).

It is interesting to observe that the Perspective Plan for Education in Karnataka was written after the National Curriculum Framework 2005, which had sought to encourage a more complex engagement with theories of learning. However, in spite of its claims to building on existing national policy perspectives, the Perspective Plan did not reflect the constructivist ideals that were being put forward at this time at the national level. School processes were described, with little elaboration, as an infrastructural addition to the education system. The Perspective Plan identified child-centred programs like *Nali Kali,* and the *Chaitanya* initiative (involving activity-focused lessons), as ‘very good academic interventions aimed at improving quality’ (GoK 2007a:24). The second pedagogic reform program discussed in this book, *LC*, was identified as another ‘quality initiative’. However, the Perspective Plan warned without further explication that ‘it should not be a mere duplication of earlier efforts of the government, how are they any different from *Nali Kali* and *Chaitanya* programs?’ (ibid.:25). Its consideration of pedagogy seems to have been at its most cursory in such state-level visions for education reform.

Indeed, child-centred ideals have had an ambivalent role in Karnataka’s neoliberal agendas for education development. Education discourses recontextualised in these ‘official’ fields referenced multiple strands of thinking which do not easily tie together. For example, the milieu of the rural student was to be a valued, and yet notions of ‘catching up’ to economic and technological advancement also implied its deficiency. The expectations placed upon the teacher to foster child-centred interactions were demanding, and yet the teacher was also deemed replaceable by technological intervention. The ‘quality’ of education was constructed through managerial interests in the efficient measurability of outcomes. Teachers were to grapple with schizophrenic expectations of implementing child-centred practices within a competitive, managerial system. To shed light on how such mixed messages at the state policy level played out in terms of specific pedagogic programs, following are close analyses of the intentions of the *Nali Kali* and *LC* pedagogic reforms.

4.2 *Nali Kali* 'Joyful Learning'

Nali Kali (*NK*) has been heralded as one of Karnataka's most successful, innovative, and even 'revolutionary' (Macchiwalla no date) pedagogic reform programs. It began in 1995 as a UNICEF-supported project after a group of 15 government primary teachers working in a remote *taluk* of Mysore district visited rural outreach schools run by the Rishi Valley Education Centre (RVEC) in Andhra Pradesh to learn about the Centre's pedagogic practices. The RVEC ran workshops and training in multi-grade, activity-based teaching methodology for teachers and agencies in eight states in India. Visiting school teachers were interested in the potential of the multi-grade activity-based methodology to encourage their own children to be 'active' through 'child-centred', 'interactive', 'joyful' approaches (Kaul 2004:2–4). With the collaboration of state and non-government agencies, the teachers adapted and developed a 'joyful' activity-based pilot project that became known as *Nali Kali,* and referred to in English as 'joyful learning'.

With significant DPEP support after 1997, the *Nali Kali* approach became a fully-fledged Government of Karnataka programme that was upscaled over a period of 3 years and implemented in some 4,000 primary schools in districts of Mysore, Mandya, Kolar, Raichur, and Belgaum (Ramachandran 2001). During this time, the approach was mainstreamed from an NGO innovation to a state government initiative for pedagogic renewal. The programmatic expansion of *Nali Kali* involved compulsory in-service teacher training for teachers of standards 1–4, initially consisting of a 12-day residential course and annual 5-day refresher courses. While estimates vary, one report suggested that up to 16,330 teachers were trained in *Nali Kali* during the DPEP (GoI 2002). At the time of my research, teachers continued to be trained in the approach as part of government-provided in-service training. Training sessions sought to encourage new ways of understanding the teacher–student relationship: 'the basic idea is to help the teacher understand the family and the larger social context of their students and try not to be judgemental and help children move from one level to another without fear of censure, failure, or fear' (Ramachandran 2000:3). The *NK* approach was seen as departing from the 'passive and one-way communication that characterises most schools', and as requiring the teacher to 'transform herself, from an authoritarian figure to a fun-loving and creative facilitator' (ibid.:1–2).

Nali Kali in-service training, led by resource persons who were themselves teachers, aimed to be participatory in nature in order to involve teachers in the development of the approach. The initial training sessions included curriculum planning, developing learning activities, and producing resource materials that support the *Nali Kali* methodology. However, the initial participatory objectives of the *NK* teacher training became increasingly difficult with the upscaling of the program. From 2001, teaching materials and curriculum content which had been initially developed by classroom teachers during *NK* training sessions were produced and distributed by the state government. According to a senior government officer who had been involved in the early development of the program, the conduct of mass training sessions as part of the programmatic upscaling of *Nali Kali* made it difficult for teachers to develop a sense of ownership of the project. Teachers' enthusiasm for, and conceptual understanding of, the *Nali Kali* pedagogy waned in the face of its programmatic implementation. Similar conclusions were drawn in evaluative studies of the *Nali Kali* program (cf. Lalitha 2003; Anandalakshmy and Krishnamurthy 2002 cited in Sarangapani and Vasavi 2003). The programmatic mechanisms for teacher training meant that the *Nali Kali* pedagogy itself was relayed to teachers in training sessions via strongly framed (controlled) processes of instruction.

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy has been continually reshaped as it has evolved from a small-scale pilot to a state-wide program. The analysis of the principles and ideals of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy I present below focuses on the post-2001 iteration of the programme and draws on one of the few detailed publications on the approach: *Nali Kali: The joy of learning* (2004) written by a former highly ranked State Project Director for the Government of Karnataka who was closely involved in the development of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy during the DPEP period.

4.2.1 Nali Kali Pedagogic Principles

The objectives of the *Nali Kali* program are to reform the 'non-participatory', 'teacher-centred' instruction of the traditional system which had been associated with low enrolment, retention, and achievement in rural government primary schools (Kaul 2004:21). The pedagogic approach has been explicitly described by Kaul as 'activity based' and 'child centred' (Kaul 2004:2). A closer analysis of the instructional principles of the pedagogy reveals the ways in which this child-centred approach is conceptualised.

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy is organised around a series of 'learning cards' supplied by the state in the place of textbooks. Each learning card has a specific objective and 'activity' for children to work on in small groups (sample activities are described below). The learning cards are organised around the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) syllabus for primary subjects of mathematics, language, and environmental science (see Chapter 3). There is a strong classification of subject knowledge, in that activities are set out for each subject in separate timetable blocks. The MLL-based learning cards also strongly framed the selection and sequence of knowledge. Children are to move through the syllabus of the pre-sequenced cards in a stepwise progression with 'an understanding that there is a certain cognitive sequence to learning' (Kaul 2004:4). The strongly framed sequencing of knowledge is detailed and explicit – for example, students are expected to learn to write and recognise the numbers 1–5 before being introduced to numbers 6–9.

While students are not given explicit control over the selection and sequence of knowledge, the *Nali Kali* program claims there is to be 'no pressure on the child to rote learn huge portions' (Kaul 2004:21). The intention is for children to progress through the sequence of learning cards at their 'own pace'; if learning cards were not ‘mastered’ during the year, they could be rolled over to the next (ibid.:21). The learning cards for each subject are to be displayed on the classroom wall in sequence so that students can access them independently. Displaying the cards was described by Kaul as a strategy for dealing with student absenteeism, as students would be able to pick up the learning cards where they left off. What this practice implies in Bernstein’s terminology is a weaker framing on the pace of knowledge acquisition; apparent control is given to students through privileging a more individualised, naturalised mode of learning. *Nali Kali* teaching is constructed as the ‘facilitation’ of students’ learning, with their ‘readiness to learn’ underscored. However, teachers are also expected to teach according to a syllabus guide which outlines the ‘portions’ that should be completed for each month. This, in effect, pulls back to a stronger, state-directed control over the pace of knowledge acquisition.

The learning cards are recommended in support of the ‘activity-based’ method and the encouragement of group work in classrooms. Group activities are meant to create ‘an atmosphere in the classroom that is informal, non-hierarchical, and friendly’ (ibid.:21), challenging the authority of the teacher and social hierarchies. These practices appear to reflect what Bernstein (1975) called an ‘invisible pedagogy’, in which the boundaries and control of social relationships and learning are made implicit. However, even though students are meant to control their own learning, that learning was still within predetermined structures and sequences. For example, classroom learning activities are categorised into four teaching stages: ‘preparatory’, ‘instructional’, ‘reinforcement’, and ‘evaluation’ (Kaul 2004:7). Table 4.1 below summarises selected suggested activities, incorporating learning cards, for teaching the first five letters of the Kannada language.[2] Similar activities are suggested for teaching subsequent letters of the language.

The activities outlined above show how the *Nali Kali* pedagogy attempted to move beyond textbook-based instruction, and to create a sense of ‘joyful togetherness’ and ‘curiosity and wonder’ in the classroom. In the MLL syllabus, language teaching was approached through a fixed sequence of letter acquisition. With *Nali Kali*, such slicing up of language into small isolated competencies (here, five specific letters at a time) gave way to activities that required the child to ‘match’, ‘identify’, ‘recognise’, ‘arrange’, ‘read’, and ‘write’. The piecewise structure of the syllabus, however, maintained a strong control over the evaluative criteria (outcomes) of learning. The nature of the activities proposed and their terminal objectives are not easily oriented towards the participative and open-ended learning that an ‘activity-based’ approach might otherwise suggest.

A specific objective of promoting group work in *Nali Kali* is to provide a pragmatic strategy for the teacher in managing multi-grade classrooms, often with over

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[2] The Kannada language is alphasyllabic and made up of 49 phonemic letters written in the Kannada script. The first five that are taught through the *Nali Kali* method are Ra, Ga, Sa, Da, and A (represented here in English orthography).

Table 4.1 *Nali Kali* selected activities for teaching five Kannada letters

Teaching stage	Example activities
Preparatory	Children are to sing a series of five songs to 'create a feeling of joyful togetherness in the classroom' Teachers are to tell a series of six stories, 'to create a sense of curiosity and wonder' Children are to do craft work involving painting with rubber letters
Instructional	Children are given two sets of cards with individual letters written on them. 'The child matches cards with identical letters' Using pictures that begin with each letter, the teacher tells a story based around the picture, 'to enable the child to associate the word with the picture' 'The teacher demonstrates the manner in which a letter is written.' 'The child arranges pebbles or tamarind seeds' along an outline of a letter to learn the shape and direction of movement to write it
Reinforcement	'The child matches […] a series of pictures' to words that have used combinations of the five letters 'The child identifies the missing letter' from incomplete words written underneath corresponding pictures Using picture-cards, 'the child recognises the picture and reads and writes the word below it' 'The cards have simple pictures and two-word phrases […]. Children read and write them' A word-game using the letters is conducted: 'the child who makes the largest number of words' using the letters wins. 'The game instils a feeling of competition among the children'
Evaluation	A group game akin to 'bingo', in which one child reads the sound of a letter and the others see if they can locate and identify the corresponding letter on their cards, assesses 'the child's listening and reading skills'

Adapted from Kaul (2004:5–7). Emphases added

40 children.[3] This was an official stance, which identified the group-based organisation of students as a 'management system' for large multi-grade classes (Kaul 2004:21). Student grouping intended to enable peer instruction, so that teachers could direct their attention to different groups of learners. The large class sizes and poorly resourced teaching environments of many rural primary schools create significant demands for teachers working under the complex expectations of a child-centred pedagogy. In the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, organising students into small groups to work on the learning card activities was not necessarily a means of promoting collaborative or participative interaction for ideals of exploratory, 'activity-based' learning, but also a method of coping with context-specific demands.

In the *Nali Kali* approach, the evaluation of students is to take place through teachers' observations of their work, the use of activities, or evaluative games.

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[3] The official teacher–pupil ratio is 1:40. However, this represents the ratio of all teachers to all students in a school, not that of individual classes. Together with teacher deputation to other schools, vacancies, and absenteeism, there are often more than 40 students in a class.

These were to replace the dominant practice of examinations. Through this approach, the criteria of evaluation are made implicit; however, the overall progress of the child with respect to the linear syllabus remained explicit. For example, students are to track their own progress through the learning cards by using the ‘learning ladder’, a pictorial chart displayed on the classroom wall which marked major ‘milestones’ of syllabus achievement. Teachers are to keep record of students’ completed activities through another progress chart displayed on the wall that records each major skill or piece of syllabus content. Students are not to be ranked according to grades, but according to how far they progress through the learning card sequence.

Homework is not a feature of the *Nali Kali* approach; in order to reduce the ‘burden’ on children, ‘all learning is done in the class’ (Kaul 2004:20). This is to account for the domestic work children engage in, and the assumption that many children ‘are not likely to get support from parents’ to complete schoolwork at home (ibid.:20). In practice, however, homework tasks, primarily involving ‘copy-writing’ (the repetitive writing of given word/sentences), are commonplace. These tasks did not require the child to draw on resources from the home. The standardisation of *Nali Kali* learning cards since 2001 conflicted with the program’s initial desire for locally contextualised learning activities. These practices produced a strong classification of specialised school knowledge in which strong boundaries were formed between the school and the home.

4.2.2 Regulative Discourses of the Nali Kali Pedagogy

A significant aspect of the *Nali Kali* reform is its emphasis on each child’s affective needs: ‘the most precious part of *Nali Kali* is that the system is designed to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of security in the child’ (Kaul 2004:21). Teachers are expected to have an open and equal relation with children and to sit with them during learning activities in open participation. Whole-class games, craft, song, and dance are recommended, and the classroom is expected to be lively and colourful. The framing over teacher–student interaction is to be weakened as children are expected to ask questions and seek help.

The evaluative labels of students as ‘dull’ and ‘bright’, which had been in common usage, are replaced by ‘slow learners’ and ‘fast learners’ in the *Nali Kali* reform language. This shift appeared to challenge the pervasive biological determinism of ‘IQ’ by suggesting a developmental, social, and perhaps more inclusive view of learning ability (i.e. a slow learner is still a learner, unlike a ‘dull’ child). However, the evaluative labels of fast/slow of course retained a normative assessment of the child, foregrounding the *pace* of knowledge acquisition to expose new pathologies of educational ability.

Table 4.2 brings together the expectations of, and labels for, teachers, students, schools, and parents produced by the ‘official’ discourse of *Nali Kali*. These descriptors are cited from Kaul (2004) to reveal the ways in which *Nali Kali* pedagogy sought to regulate the participants of the reform.

Table 4.2 *Nali Kali* 'ideal type' regulative discourses

	Expectations/assumptions	Labels
Students	Individual interests Self-confidence Self-esteem Happy Self-regulated learning Communicative Own pacing Peer teaching, group learning Independent learning Burdened with household chores Irregular to school Multi-level (ability) Selected skills: explore, identify, sing, dance, play, demonstrate, see, match, fill in, count, write, assemble	Creative Different Equal Active Independent Dominant evaluative labels: slow learners, fast learners
Teachers	Creative Friendly Communicative Participatory Frequent movement Classroom management	Facilitator Active
Classroom/school	Non-discriminatory Informal Non-hierarchical Participatory, interactive, activities Noisy Decorative Democratic, equal Multi-grade, multi-level Secure Freedom Relevant, contextual	Attractive Friendly Joyful Active
Parents/home	No support for homework All learning is done in class Irregular to school Absent for labour work Provide material resources	

Extracted from Kaul (2004)

It is observable from *Nali Kali* expectations and labels that 'democratic' and 'participatory' ideals seek to weaken (or at least make less visible) hierarchic relations in the classroom. The child is constructed as an individual, in whom difference and independence are valued. The classroom environment is to be 'attractive', 'friendly', 'joyful', and 'active', relying heavily on the communicative skills of the teacher and their disposition to be personable ('friendly') towards their students.

In many ways, parents (or students' home contexts) are positioned as irrelevant to school learning processes.

This analysis shows how an 'invisible pedagogy' of apparent learner freedom was embedded in a structure in which the rules of learning were explicit and controlling. The highly structured MLL syllabus used a strong framing over the selection, sequence, and evaluative criteria of knowledge. Despite this, weaker or implicit forms of control regarding pacing and social relations were proposed by the *Nali Kali* pedagogy. Not surprisingly, the MLL has been widely critiqued for its instrumental orientation and normative assumptions about linear knowledge acquisition, which conflict with the weaker framing of child-centred ideals (cf. Dhankar 2003; Kumar 2004b; Sadgopal 2006).

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy is of course reshaped in classrooms, potentially in strikingly different ways to this account of the reform's ideals. The program's formalised structure has also changed significantly since its initial development. Evaluative methods such as daily homework and end of year testing have recently become accepted practices. The state has provided students with standardised workbooks for written exercises, and, as mentioned above, the expansion of the program has led to the mass production of the learning cards which had been previously made by the individual teacher for her own class. These provisions indicate a strengthened framing over the pedagogy, and a shift towards performance modes of instruction.

Indeed, as the first section of this chapter has shown, *Nali Kali* child-centred principles were introduced in a context of increasingly competitive, performance-based schooling. The tensions this introduction created were visible when the *Nali Kali* program was scaled back to implementation in only standards 1 and 2 in 2001 (from its previous implementation in standards 1–4). At this time, a textbook-based program was introduced for standards 3 and 4 which retained the 'activity-based' rhetoric in its textbook series *Kali Nali*. Teachers explained how the name *Kali Nali* meant 'learn, then play', a more instrumentally oriented pedagogy than the 'joyful learning' of *Nali Kali* which had seemingly emphasised playing over learning. There is here a disjuncture in how teachers and the programideals conceptualised classroom pedagogy. The program sought to integrate learning with activity/play, yet teachers saw a clear distinction between 'play' and 'learning' in classrooms. The downscaling of *Nali Kali* to standards 1 and 2 also positioned the pedagogy as a packaged program that was specialised and not desirable for all, yet expected to be sustained within the wider performance-oriented cultures of the school and education system.

The principles which shaped the 'ideal' form of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy are summarised in Table 4.3 (in relation to the post-2001 features of the program). Using Bernstein's categories, the relative strengths of the program's classification and framing of knowledge transmission are identified in the table by C+ for stronger classification, C− for weaker classification, F+ for stronger framing, and F− for weaker framing. Identifying the pedagogic principles in this way helps us to see in what aspects the *Nali Kali* reform moved towards what Bernstein called a competence model.

Table 4.3 Summary of *Nali Kali* pedagogic principles (ideal type post-2001, stds. 1 and 2)

Selection of knowledge	MLL syllabus for three subjects: mathematics, Kannada, and EVS (environmental studies)	C+
	Knowledge selected for students and published on standardised learning cards	F+
	No formal hierarchy between subjects, which are equally timetabled in separate slots. Exclusive of family/community knowledge	C+
Sequencing of knowledge	Linear, fixed, sequence of knowledge through learning cards, organised by grade and subject	C+
	Progression through sequenced levels determined by teacher assessment criteria, and state guidelines of monthly syllabus 'portions' to be covered	F+
	Activities within a sequenced level on learning cards chosen according to teacher assessment of appropriateness.	F+
Pacing of knowledge	Pace of knowledge determined by monthly 'portion' guide to syllabus, but students also said to work at 'own pace'	F+/F−
	Pace of content development controlled by teacher based on observed continuous assessment of students	F+
Evaluation criteria and processes	Evaluation criteria explicit through the progress chart, which is grade specific, and standardised through all schools. Criteria based on achievement of MLL components. No homework officially set	C+
	Evaluation of students by continuous, non-formal assessment conducted by the teacher, through observations and activities	F+
	Student groups based on level of syllabus acquisition, not age or grade. Groups determined by teacher's assessment criteria. Groups do not have to remain fixed	F+
	Students' progress marked on progress chart displayed on classroom wall. Students able to track their own progress	C+
Space/resources/interaction	Classroom space used diversely. Students work in groups and in whole-class organisation. This is determined by the teacher, but there are weaker controls on student movement	F+/F−
	Students access resources when relevant to learning tasks. Local, low-cost material teaching aids are used	F−
	Teacher sits with students in small groups to help them with their work. In groups, children also provide peer support. Children can ask for help at all times	F−
	Students ask questions, seek clarification, in open communication with teacher	F−

From this summary, one can see that *Nali Kali*'s weakening of the pedagogic code was primarily concerned with the nature of teacher–student relations. The range of options available to students in terms of the use of space and interactions with teachers was to be expanded, as indicated by a weaker framing (F−) over these aspects. The new relation was not unexpected given the emphasis on the affective, 'joyful' aspects of pedagogic interaction. In this sense, the greatest change sought by the pedagogy in its organising structure related to the regulative discourses of the child; the social expectations placed on students were significantly expanded to foreground their independence and individuality.

However, the classification and framing of the instructional aspects (the selection, sequence, and pacing) of the pedagogy were, in the main, relatively strong. There were some attempts to loosen the teacher's control over the pacing of knowledge within classroom interaction, but the monthly syllabus schedule maintained strong framing rules over this pacing. In particular, the *Nali Kali* model maintained a strong classification over the selection of school knowledge via the standardised MLL syllabus. Thus, the ideals of the pedagogy pulled only certain pedagogic features towards a competence model of weak classification and framing of knowledge relay. The recontextualisation of 'child-centred' education in this case did not imply a loosened framing of instructional practices, as suggested by the broad rhetoric of the reform. The child-centred approach of this pedagogy was shaped by mixed strengths of codes, and strong controls over many aspects of the pedagogy remained even in its official form.

4.3 The 'Learner-Centred' Initiative

The second child-centred reform examined for this study was the 'learner-centred' initiative (or *LC* for short) implemented in 2005 in rural government primary schools of Kamala cluster, Karnataka. *LC* was developed by a Karnataka-based non-government organisation (NGO) seeking to establish an 'alternative approach to learning' in government primary schools (LC 2006:3). According to the NGO's documentation, the program was a response to concerns about the 'existing system' of primary education, specifically the organisation of learning around standardised syllabi and evaluation criteria, the prevalence of content-based memorisation, and teacher-centred instruction directed by the textbook. The *LC* pedagogy sought to reconfigure the pervasive performance models of pedagogy in Karnataka rural schools.

The NGO acknowledged the intentions of the *Nali Kali* program to reform some of these features of primary schooling. However, *Nali Kali* was critiqued for emphasising songs, dance, and drama as 'joyful' curricula content, rather than engaging with the dynamic 'relationship between content and learning' (LC 2006:33). The *Nali Kali* standardised learning cards were perceived to function in the same way as decontextualised textbooks, whereby 'larger objectives, content, and learning outcomes are determined independent of learner, teacher, and environment' (ibid.). Thus, the *LC* program sought a renewed focus on the 'relevance' of schooling for rural primary school students and on learning as a complex relational process of meaning construction.

LC was implemented as a pilot project in all 23 government primary schools of Kamala cluster through a series of in-service training workshops with the schools' teachers. In its first year, *LC* project officers began training government teachers of standards 1–3 in Kamala cluster in the pedagogy. The following year, standard 4 teachers were involved in the training, and in 2007 (the time of my research), the program engaged all standard 1–5 government teachers in Kamala cluster. In 2008, the program was upscaled by the Government of Karnataka and implemented in 274 rural government primary schools. The *LC* method replaced existing programs of teaching in these schools, including the *Nali Kali* pedagogy in standards 1 and 2 and the activity-based textbooks used in standards 3 and 4. All *LC* teachers interviewed in my research had previously worked with the *Nali Kali* program.

The *LC* initiative was an example of the public–private partnerships in state education that had become increasingly common in Karnataka. Teachers were government employees but were involved in training workshops led by NGO project officers, and exempt from some otherwise compulsory practices (like the annual standardised testing of students, and state-led teacher training sessions). Key project officers from the NGO emphasised the need to position the *LC* initiative as a joint effort with the state in order for it to gain legitimacy in teachers' eyes. The involvement of an officer from the Government's District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) in the *LC* project was intended to send 'a strong message of partnership' to teachers (LC 2006:13). To further emphasise the NGO's alignment with the state agendas in education, *LC* project officers would explicitly draw parallels between the *LC* approach and the constructivist theories presented in the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (see Chapter 3).

4.3.1 LC Pedagogic Principles

The *LC* program sought to emphasise 'how children learn', not only what they learn. This was based on the premise that 'if facilitators [teachers] understand *how* children learn and develop the ability to support them in contextualising their learning, children will learn more effectively in a self-directed manner' (LC 2006:2). The NGO's documentation identified the *LC* approach as centred on *learning* and *learners*, as distinct from a 'child-centred' education. It was positioned as a 'process-oriented' approach, emphasising notions of 'capability building' and 'relevant learning' (ibid.:3). Indeed, the NGO made a considered attempt to present *LC* not as set of programmatic pedagogic 'rules', but as an *approach* to rethinking perceived assumptions about learners and learning in rural Indian primary schools.

The *LC* program sought to make significant changes to the ways in which school knowledge is selected and sequenced. With no textbooks or *Nali Kali* learning cards, the MLL syllabus content is 'reinterpreted' by teachers during monthly 'collective meetings' run by the NGO project officers. Syllabus content is reorganised into integrative themes which are taught over varying lengths of time, depending on the teacher's assessment of her students' needs. Teachers are expected to explore and relate several concepts for each theme through a process of 'concept mapping'. A concept map is to be planned by teachers, but is also shaped by discussions with students; the development of the concept map itself is seen by the NGO as a learning activity. The concept map is to be written up and displayed on the wall of the classroom, and can be modified and expanded based on student and teacher input. Box 4.1 describes the process of concept mapping and presents a sample concept map used by the *LC* NGO for the theme of 'school'.

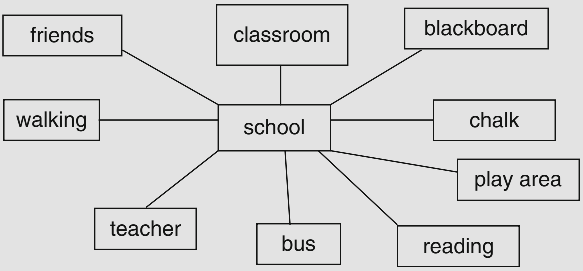
Without a textbook or *Nali Kali* learning cards by which to present fixed 'knowledge', teachers are required to research and prepare the themes with what was generally available to them (e.g. media sources, community/school/NGO resources, own experiences, and knowledge base). The content of each theme should be shaped by students' responses and contributions to discussions. In this way, the *LC* pedagogy suggested a weaker classification of school knowledge; this knowledge was to be co-constructed from the resources brought to the classroom by pupils and teachers.

Box 4.1 *LC* Sample Concept Map

What is a concept map?

A concept map is process through which a student would convey his/her personal understanding of a concept (object or event) in a context referred to as the theme. Similar and contrasting information is used to categorize concepts and linkages are drawn to state relationships across concepts. A basic example is shown below:

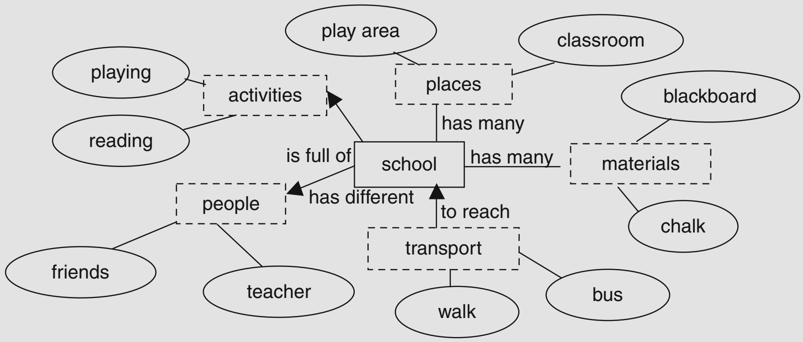
Step 1: Elicit related information/experiences.



Step 2: Group them into broad categories (aspects).
Categories: people, materials, transport, places, activities
Step 3: Map relationships of concepts, aspects and key information.

(continued)

Box 4.1 (continued)


play area
classroom
playing
activities
places
blackboard
has many
reading
is full of
school
has many
materials
people
has different
to reach
chalk
transport
friends
teacher
walk
bus

What capabilities can be developed through concept mapping?

Many of the capabilities/curricular learning outcomes would be assessed through concept mapping. For example, while a teacher facilitates the development of conceptual links in a whole group setting, s/he might observe how students listen and respond to one another, and provide examples to support their ideas. In observing students engaging in concept mapping processes within learning groups, teachers might focus on students' attentiveness to detail in developing concepts, their abilities to create linkages, or analyze relationships.

How can a concept map help teachers understand how students learn?

Concept mapping would enable teachers to better understand how students form individual connections to concepts, links/associations made with information, relate concepts to each other, and relate concepts to themes. For example, in the concept mapping example shown above, a student's understanding of the concept of school and related aspects is reflected in the following linkages:

A school has many places
Transport is needed to reach school
School is full of activities
A school has many materials
School has different people

Source: *LC* NGO unpublished information sheet

In an ideal *LC* classroom, the day is to be timetabled not according to subjects (as in the *Nali Kali* pedagogy), but to the type of learning activity as part of an integrated curriculum. The pacing of the day and types of activities is to be weakly framed, in order to respond to the nature of student discussions. The NGO recommended that the morning should begin with a 'whole-group discussion' in which the teacher poses questions for children to discuss with relation to the current theme. Based on the knowledge and ideas generated from discussions, children then break off into smaller groups (of mixed ages) to discuss and write responses to questions set by the teacher. Students report back as a group, and one member is to write group responses on the board. This is called 'small-group discussion' or 'learner groups'. In the afternoon session, called 'individual practice time', the teacher sets students to work individually on a written, oral, or creative task based on discussions or particular skills that had emerged from the concept. The NGO provided teachers a series of student workbooks (for differing levels of ability) for 'individual practice time' sessions. The content of workbooks was based on suggestions and sample worksheets created by teachers during monthly meetings with project officers.

The *LC* NGO reorganised classes in Kamala cluster to be mixed grade and mixed age. In contrast to the *Nali Kali* view of mixed-grade teaching as a classroom-management strategy, in the *LC* model, it was positioned as a benefit to learning processes. The diversity of students in mixed-grade classrooms is seen to enrich the development of themes/concepts. During small-group discussions, older students are able to provide peer support. Differentiated learning tasks are recommended for individual work. A student who had not developed a particular skill would be able to do so in subsequent concepts or even the following year when the theme would be revisited, akin to Bruner's (1978) 'spiral curriculum'. These conditions were to produce a weakly framed sequencing of syllabus knowledge.

The *LC* teacher is to control the pace of concept or skill development based on her observational assessment of students. Students are not to be openly tested or ranked in the *LC* pedagogy, but their work is to be kept in files in order to track their progress over the 5 years of lower-primary education. Homework is not given to students unless it was a task that directly related to the development of the concept at hand. Pupil evaluation is to occur through observations about children's academic, psychomotor, and social progress, and is written qualitatively by teachers in a record book with a standardised format developed by the NGO. Observational evaluation criteria are explicit to teachers, but not necessarily to children.

4.3.2 Regulative Discourses of the LC Pedagogy

The qualitative approach to evaluation in the *LC* model requires teachers to pay close attention to all aspects of students' development. The pedagogy produced hierarchic evaluative labels for students ('dependent', 'interested', 'engaged', and 'independent') which attempted to categorise pupils' *disposition* to learning processes, rather than relate primarily to the pace of knowledge acquisition (e.g. in *Nali Kali*,

Table 4.4 *LC* 'ideal type' regulative discourse

	Expectations/assumptions	Labels
Students	Think independently Act independently Problem solving Group work, interaction Construct meaning Skills: discuss, explain, create, evaluate, analyse, remember, listen, make opinions, ask critical questions	Learner Active Evaluative labels: dependent, interested, engaged, independent
Teachers	Empowered Listen to children's views Observant Movement Mix easily Reflective Planned and prepared	Facilitator
Classroom/school	Non-competitive Capability building Non-hierarchic Relevant Locally contextual Discussion Pleasurable	Relevant
Parents/home	Help to find answers to questions	

Extracted from *LC* (2006)

'slow learner' and 'fast learner'). These evaluative categories were to help teachers organise students into groups in order to provide differentiated work during 'individual practice time'.

The discussion-based approach of the *LC* pedagogy expected a student–teacher interaction in the classroom to have a function beyond the interrogatory, expository, and evaluative forms of classroom talk. This required the teacher to support a more democratic, dialogic interaction within the classroom. In such pedagogic relay, the control (or framing) over the relationship between the teacher, child, and knowledge is to be weakened. The *LC* approach expected the teacher to provide the conditions for such interaction, making a radical departure from the construction of primary students as passive learners acquiring fixed knowledge.

In Table 4.4 below, I present some of the ways in which students, teachers, the classroom, and parents were described in the NGO's documentation of the *LC* pedagogy, in order to highlight some of the social expectations produced by the 'official' discourses of this reform.

This table illustrates the *LC* concern with 'relevant' and 'locally contextual' learning. The child was constructed as an active learner in their environment. There were attempts to weaken the boundary between the home and the school; parents were to be seen as a potential resource of knowledge ('help to find answers to questions').

Each child was viewed as an individual with affective needs, but the *LC* discourse shifted the focus from creating a 'happy' child (see *Nali Kali* discourses represented in Table 4.2) to expecting the child to 'think', 'act', 'create', and 'discuss', for example. The evaluative labels applied to students highlighted the nature of students' disposition to learning processes (e.g. 'engaged', 'interested').

While the *Nali Kali* program emphasised the personality (friendliness) of the teacher, the *LC* model also expected the teacher to recognise her students as learners and closely observe learning processes. A weakened hierarchy between the teacher and student (to 'mix easily') was suggested, but, in addition to students' affective needs, each child's capabilities and *learning* needs were underscored. The construction of the teacher as 'facilitator' demanded teachers to listen, observe, and reflect upon learning processes. This produced increased expectations of teachers' preparation, planning, use of resources, and communicative abilities. Indeed, the *LC* model can be seen as what Bernstein called an 'expensive' pedagogy in terms of its requisites of individual teachers' time and commitment, preparedness, and ability to draw from multiple resources.

The principles of the *LC* pedagogy are summarised in Table 4.5. Again, I draw on Bernstein's concepts of classification (C) and framing (F) to identify the relative strengths of the *LC* pedagogic codes. These are symbolised through + (stronger codes) and – (weaker codes).

This summary illustrates how the *LC* reform sought to weaken a number of aspects of the pedagogic code (represented by F–). Like the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, this largely occurred with respect to loosening the framing over teacher–student relations. Also bearing some similarity to the *Nali Kali* model, the pacing of knowledge acquisition was intended to be less tightly controlled. This looser pace was potentially assisted by the weaker framing over the selection of knowledge, in contrast to the monthly syllabus that maintained a tight frame over the pacing of knowledge in *Nali Kali*. Indeed, the most noticeable difference between the two pedagogies related to the selection of knowledge. The *LC* reform sought to weaken the boundaries of what counted as school knowledge through the use of integrative themes and the collaborative development of concept maps. This focus appeared to assist the weakening of other aspects of the instructional discourse, for instance, the controls over the sequence of knowledge. Nevertheless, the *LC* pedagogy maintained a strong evaluative code. We can thus see how the *LC* reform, like the *Nali Kali* program, was a model of mixed pedagogic codes.

In challenging the performance-oriented pedagogic interactions prevailing in Indian primary schools, the two pedagogic reforms analysed here were not always governed by weaker rules of classification and framing. The analysis of each program's ideals reveals how child-centred education was recontextualised in the Karnataka context, and illustrates how national policy agendas discussed in Chapter 3 (namely the emphasis on 'joyful' learning in the 1990s and more recent interests in constructivist learning theories in the National Curriculum Framework 2005) took programmatic form. Both the *Nali Kali* and *LC* reforms were located in India's

Table 4.5 Summary of *LC* pedagogic principles (ideal type 2007, stds. 1–5)

Selection of knowledge	MLL syllabus of mathematics, Kannada, and EVS reorganised by teachers in integrative themes	C–
	Concept map of integrative theme developed by students, through discussions of the theme	F–
	The day is not timetabled according to subjects, but to organisation of student activity (whole-group discussion, small-group work, individual practice time) set by the teacher	F+
Sequencing of knowledge	Non-linear sequencing of syllabus knowledge supported through concepts	C–
	Teacher controls sequencing of knowledge in concept development, but sequence of knowledge can be also based on discussion and input from the pupil	F+/F–
Pacing of knowledge	A student who has not developed a particular skill can do so in subsequent concepts or the following year when the theme is revisited	F–
	Pace of content development controlled by teacher based on observed continuous assessment of students	F+
Evaluation criteria and processes	Evaluation of progress and skill recorded qualitatively in an observation book for each student with a set format. Evaluation criteria are standardised (decided by NGO) across all schools and grades. Evaluative criteria are not always known to students	C+
	Evaluation of students by continuous, non-formal assessment, conducted by the teacher through observations of students' written work, activities, and interactions	F+
	Differentiated learning groups identified by the teacher, but student groups do not have to remain fixed	F+
	Homework based only on concepts and only set if deemed by the teacher to be relevant to the development of the theme. Homework may involve using parents/community as resources	C–
Space/resources/ interaction	Classroom space used diversely. Students work in groups and as a whole class. Groupings determined by the teacher but there are weaker controls on student movement	F+/F–
	Students access resources when relevant to learning tasks. Local, low-cost material teaching aids, and community members are potential resources for knowledge	F–
	Students ask questions, seek clarification, and contribute to knowledge construction in open communication with teacher	F–
	Teacher sits with children during whole-class discussion, small-group work, and individual practice time to assist them. Children can ask for help at all times	F–

stred education. However, as the first part of this chapter showed, the reforms were also to function within a Karnataka state policy context which was heavily promoting neoliberal development agendas and practices. Through the detailed analysis of each program's pedagogic principles, we were able to see how child-centred education in this context was multiply constituted. To this end, the analysis illuminated the complexity of the two 'pedagogies for development' beyond teacher-centred/student-centred dualisms.

It is important to remember that this analysis has dealt with the 'ideal types' of the *LC* and *Nali Kali* pedagogies; these models are of course reshaped, often in starkly different ways, in schools and classrooms. Having used Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to describe how the pedagogic principles of *Nali Kali* and *LC* were constituted in 'official' fields, the remaining chapters of this book focus on the ways in which the two pedagogies were recontextualised by teachers in their school settings. I begin by considering the implications of these pedagogies for teachers' work in Karnataka rural government primary schools.

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Chapter 5
On Being a Teacher: Work Stories in Contexts of Change

Seeking to address teaching as a 'site of social struggle' (Connell 2009:13), this chapter sets out to illuminate the ways in which child-centred reforms have repositioned teachers' work in India. Teachers' work is central to educational change. By analysing teaching as a form of work, educational researchers have attempted to engage with the industrial, social, and material conditions – and contestations – of educational change. Research has, for example, examined the industrial dynamics of teaching as a labour process (Lawn 1987; Ozga 1988; Reid 2003), the de-skilling of teachers through market-driven reform and 'school-effectiveness' discourses (Bascia and Hargreaves 2000; Woods and Jeffrey 2002; Ball 2001; Apple 1982), and the complex gender politics of teaching within schools (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Blackmore 1999). The biographical turn in educational research has offered nuanced insights into the lived experiences of teaching and the negotiation of multiple subjectivities in teachers' work (Acker 1994; Middleton 1993; Casey 1993; Evans 2002).

In this chapter, I examine what it means to be a teacher in rural Karnataka through teachers' accounts of the social and institutional expectations, challenges, and regulation of teaching. I begin by examining dominant discourses of the 'good' teacher to show the complex demands visited on teachers by child-centred reforms in Mallige and Kamala clusters. These expectations are then brought into relation with teachers' accounts of their entry to the teaching profession and with the emerging 'feminisation' of the Indian teaching workforce. I discuss the multiple and at times countervailing constructions of teachers' moral authority and social status and examine the occupational cultures of rural Indian schools with respect to the institutional regulation and management of teachers' work. All too often, education policy constructs teachers as agents of social change, and as implementers of program directives, without addressing the social and material contingencies of teaching through which reform discourses are recontextualised. It is my intention, then, that this chapter highlights the social assumptions of educational change in relation to the *Nali Kali* and *LC* child-centred reforms in rural Karnataka.

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5.1 The ‘Good’ Teacher

Influential studies in the sociology of teaching in the west (cf. Grace 1978; Smyth and Shacklock 1998; Lawn 1996; Ball 2001) have illuminated the ways in which the ‘good’ teacher is constituted, controlled, and evaluated through markets, institutional regulations, and educational ‘science’. In the neoliberal environment, the dominant discourse of the ‘good’ teacher posits the teacher as a classroom technician who is seen to be ‘a competent employee, trying to meet production or efficiency targets, decided nationally and rewarded locally’ (Lawn 1996:17). Moore (2004) examines how, alongside skills-based competencies, the construction of the ‘good’ teacher as a reflexive practitioner and competent craftsperson has gained popular appeal. Teachers are positioned as charismatic and caring subjects; the ‘good’ teacher is one who has certain ‘intrinsic’ characteristics and dispositions. The success and failure of the teacher is thereby individualised instead of being connected to the complex social processes which constitute teachers’ work. Moore’s critical review of this scenario does not set out to diminish the importance of care or reflection in teaching. Rather, he highlights how foregrounding the individualised teacher-subject marginalises discourses of teaching which recognise the socially mediated, idiosyncratic, and contingent aspects of teachers’ work.

Teaching in India is undergoing rapid change whereby discourses of the ‘good’ teacher are increasingly complex and demanding. In particular, child-centred reforms have sought to reconfigure the role of the teacher from an authoritarian instructor to a personable ‘facilitator’. The personality and commitment of the individual teacher has been positioned as central to the success of pedagogic reform. In Chapter 4, we saw how ‘official’ discourses of the *Nali Kali* and *LC* programs required the teacher to be, for example, ‘creative, friendly, communicative, participatory’ and ‘empowered, reflective, observant’. Indeed, the teachers I interviewed often expressed similar ideals about the qualities or characteristics a good teacher should have (see Box 5.1). Qualities which involved being ‘personable’, ‘maternal’, ‘democratic’, and ‘reflexive’ were dominant in their constructions of the ‘good’ teacher, indicating that child-centred discourses had come to be emphasised in teachers’ conceptualisations of their own work.

These responses illustrate how a teacher’s individual personality and their ability to relate to children were perceived as central to being a ‘good’ teacher. The teacher was expected to ‘mix well’, ‘to have patience’, and ‘to talk with a bright smile’ with their students. The investment in the education of their young students was underscored; teachers ‘should have creativity’ and ‘should be learning continuously’. It was suggested that the hierarchies between the teacher and the child should be weakened by according ‘respect’ to children’s opinions and by being ‘responsive’ to their expressions. Teachers were expected to weaken social boundaries between themselves and their students: ‘we should know about their environment’ and ‘be aware of children’s problems’. Maternal discourses were explicit (to be ‘like a mother to the children’) in the teacher–student pedagogic relationship.

These responses indicate how the child-centred reforms set out to significantly shift the teacher’s role away from being solely that of an authoritative instructor.

Box 5.1 Kamala and Mallige Teachers’ Conceptualisations of a ‘Good’ Teacher

Personable

- Teacher should have patience.
- My mind should be calm.
- We should have creativity…why? Because we will be able to attract children to us… If we always come with a frown on our face and with a strict tone of voice, showing the stick at them, if we do all this, children will get scared.
- We should know about their environment and how we should mingle with children.
- They should talk with a bright smile.
- He [or she] should have a quality of mixing well with others.
- Children shouldn’t feel that teachers are boring.

Democratic

- We should respect the child’s opinion.
- As a teacher, he [or she] should listen to what the child says.
- [Teachers] should not have any discrimination between children. All are my children, whether they are rich or poor, let them come anyway [to school], whether clean or untidy. I don’t blame the child. I should have the feeling that all these are my children. I should teach them equally.

Maternal

- [A teacher] should look after the children and should build the relationship with them the same [as] with her [or his] own children.
- The teacher should be like a mother to the children.
- We should treat children with a lot of love. We should treat them as if they are our own children.

Reflexive

- A teacher means, first, [that she or] he should understand [her/]himself. He [or she] shouldn’t have an inferiority complex…First, he [or she] should give respect…first, he [or she] should respect [her/]himself.
- We ourselves, if we have bad habits and bad qualities, like if I myself am smoking a beedi or drinking, how can we tell others to develop good qualities? We have to have a good nature.
- They should have broad minds. Narrow-mindedness shouldn’t be there.
- The teachers should be aware of children’s problems, whether it is home related or school related.
- We should be totally responsive to children’s expressions.
- Teacher means, he [or she] should be learning *continuously.*

But though these expectations appear to rely on the individual commitment of teachers, they are of course contingent on complex social relationships. How are the positions of personable, democratic, maternal, and/or reflexive teachers negotiated and recontextualised in relation to the actual conditions of teachers' work? To begin to unravel teachers' multiple positionalities, I turn to consider the career motivations and recruitment experiences of the teachers in this study.

5.2 Becoming a Teacher

Becoming a 'good' teacher of the sort described above was not necessarily the primary goal of the interviewed teachers when they entered the profession. Many explained how personal and family desires for economic security, social mobility, and job stability motivated their interest in teaching. Doing a teaching qualification after the completion of high school was seen as a fast route to opening up job prospects. Many teachers' accounts of career entry reveal some ambivalence towards the profession and, for many, primary school teaching was not the first preference or an individual 'choice'. This is not to suggest teachers were necessarily uncommitted to their work, but rather to acknowledge that teaching is a job, conferring instrumental gains, subject to constraints, and often involving personal and family compromises.

In fact, when asked about their career aspirations, most teachers spoke of staying within their line of work. Many aspired to become high school teachers, and some expressed their interest in being a head teacher, or a cluster-level officer (Cluster Resource Person) in the education bureaucracy. However, opportunities for promotion were seen as limited, particularly without additional higher qualifications. This had motivated some teachers to enrol in part-time distance-learning courses while they were working. However, further study and career mobility were unrealistic aspirations for many teachers given the constraints of the labour market and personal financial responsibilities. As Mahendra explained:

> In India, it is difficult to get other jobs. That is why we have to stick on at this job. We don't have opportunities to do anything else. So if we want to study and all that, there is no opportunity. If we leave this job, what about life? (Mahendra *LC* K3)

Employment in the government education sector was a coveted (albeit relatively low) position as it offered higher salaries and greater job security than teaching in private schools.[1] More recently, however, the appeal of government service employment is waning in the face of the increasing attraction of private enterprise, especially with Karnataka's optimistic outlook on business and technology. As one teacher, Saraswathi, expressed, 'these days it is not necessary to go for a government job only'.

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[1] According to the 5th Pay Commission, which was released at the time of the research, the basic pay scale for primary school teachers begins at Rs 6,250 per month, with annual increments of Rs 125, a 12.5% 'daily allowance' and a 4% 'rural housing allowance'. In comparison, entry-level salaries for high school head teachers are approximately Rs 14,000 per month.

Becoming a primary school teacher in Karnataka typically requires teacher-training certification after the completion of PUC (pre-university college or grade 12). Initial teacher training is offered through private and public institutions which are separate from the university system. Admission to primary teacher-training courses is based on school examination marks and also takes into account caste and gender reservations. All teachers who participated in this study had completed a formal teaching certification in Kannada medium, in which, at the time, they were able to enrol after grade 10. Most teachers had completed the 1-year TCH (Teaching Certificate Higher) program, which has since been replaced by a 2-year Diploma in Education.

After the completion of the initial training course, teachers are selected into the government service based on their state-wide 'common entrance examination' rankings. The selection process does not take into account teachers' motivation and interest in teaching, interpersonal communication skills, or investment in a particular school community. Once accepted into the government service, teachers do not apply to work in individual schools but are allocated to schools based on labour demand. This process of allocation does not include interviews or consultations with teachers since previous systems of recruitment involved committees that were reported to come under 'the influence of local vested interests, and complaints of corruption began to be openly voiced' (GoK 1999). Since 1999, a computerised system has been used by the Government of Karnataka to allocate over one thousand postings at a time in an effort to ensure 'transparency, merit, and rationalisation' in the recruitment and deployment of teachers (GoK 1999). The district-level recruitment of teachers means that head teachers in schools do not have the same authority in terms of school staffing as many of their counterparts in other countries. At the time of the research, there were almost two hundred thousand government primary school teachers (Stds 1–7) across Karnataka, with approximately three thousand openings for positions each year (NUEPA 2008). This ratio gives an idea of the magnitude of the teaching workforce and the scale of the recruitment process in Karnataka's government primary education system.

Child-centred ideals suggest a close and even maternal relationship between teachers and students. Arguably, however, such district-level processes of recruitment foreground teachers' service to the government rather than to local communities or individual schools. Furthermore, the computerised allocation of positions distances communities from teachers at a bureaucratic level. This distancing does not work easily with the conceptualisation of teachers as locally invested, personable 'facilitators'. The traits of the 'good' teacher produced through child-centred discourses underscore the personal disposition of the individual, yet teachers' dispositions are largely irrelevant to institutional processes of recruitment. This is not to say that child-centred reforms are doomed to fail in such recruitment contexts, but the disjuncture exposed here does begin to highlight the struggle over conceptualising teachers' work in India's expanded state education system.

The teachers I interviewed were often candid about the industrial realities of teaching as work. When speaking about their entry into teaching, many teachers emphasised the conditions of the labour market over their desire to join a 'service' profession. For example, Lalitha, an experienced teacher, spoke frankly about the career paths of primary school teachers and highlighted how teaching was seen foremost as an employment opportunity.

> All of us teachers here did not come here aiming to become teachers. Everything is job oriented, and we also have come for the purpose of having a job. Like that, the people who come with the intention of being a teacher are very rare, maybe five per cent or ten per cent. Ninety five per cent are the other way. After they complete the PUC, they do their TCH [initial teacher training]. But once we get into the profession, we do it with great liking. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

This view is not surprising in light of the economic struggles and limited educational opportunities described by many teachers. For example, Chandregowda told me about his poor family background and his parents' desire for their son to have job security after finishing high school. He went on to describe how the TCH teaching certification was seen to offer more immediate prospects of work:

> I didn't want to become a teacher. I wanted to go to a different job…I had a wish to do higher education. But the conditions at home and poverty didn't let us continue our education. So when I couldn't complete my education, I couldn't get any other job. Then my mother and father said I could get a job faster if I did this TCH… (Chandregowda *LC* K3)

The three accounts below divulge more information about how the economic opportunities of teaching played a significant part in many teachers' motivation to enter the field (Box 5.2).

These three biographical vignettes reveal how getting work as a primary school teacher was seen to be 'possible' and at the right 'level' in terms of participants' socio-economic positions. Teaching also promised economic gain and in some cases economic survival. Furthermore, these teachers had themselves benefited from a competitive, performance-based education largely dominated by rote learning and textbook-oriented instruction. During interviews, many teachers described their own school experiences and achievements in competitive examinations which had led to their successful training and recruitment in the government education sector. If their experiences of success imply a certain 'belief' in the value of education, those experiences do not necessarily signal a belief in the new child-centred models of education. Teaching was understood as work, as livelihood, as a means for social mobility, and as a marker of teachers' success in a competitive, performance-based education system. In these terms, it is important to acknowledge how teachers implementing child-centred reforms can have multiple understandings of their work beyond the interests of reform programs.

Box 5.2 Entry into Teaching

In my family…we had…a bit of [a] problem…We didn't have a father from our childhood. […] Our mother raised us with difficulty. Raised us and gave us [an] education. […] Most of all, I needed the job…I needed the job. In our house, nobody was there who earned. My mother herself, with a lot of difficulty, she raised us while working. So since I needed a job immediately…I wanted to do a BA/BEd, but because I needed a job immediately, and nobody was there to look after our family…I had to go for the TCH [initial teacher training certificate]. I did my TCH because of the job opportunities. And after doing the TCH I got the job immediately…within ten months. And after coming here, I am satisfied. I got the facilities to look after the family, and being with these children…getting adjusted…I was happy. Even this job…being with children…I like this service. That is why I am continuing… (Jayakumara *NK* M4)

In my home, my mother was a teacher…an *anganwadi* [nursery] teacher. So I liked the way of that teaching. Initially, I wanted to be an *anganwadi* teacher only. But in my house they told me, 'that is not enough'…meaning, we need more salary also, right? So they told me to do the TCH. They told me, 'if you become a primary school teacher, it will be good'. And I felt, even for us, only this would be possible to do. Meaning…our studies were from [a] Kannada-medium school…so this [primary teaching] was only possible. (Sumithra *LC* K7)

My father is a farmer. My mother is also a farmer. But my father is a bit…educated. At that time, he had done his fifth standard. We are four children. The first brother didn't study. My second brother did his studies until SSLC [Std 10]. I studied until SSLC, and after doing this I did my PUC [Std 12]. […] I thought of doing my PUC and reaching a degree level. So I went to PUC, but after going to PUC, my mind was changed… 'No, if I go on studying like this, it will be a burden for my family. It will be a problem for them.' Because both my father and mother have to work, and they had to maintain the family. So I thought, 'let me go [in]to some profession. Let me search for a job to my level.' (Shivanna *LC* K9)

5.2.1 The Feminisation of Teaching

Historians and sociologists of education have examined the 'feminisation' of the teaching workforce in western countries and the ways in which progressive education in particular has recontextualised maternal discourses to construct the 'teacher as mother' (cf. Acker 1983; Steedman 1985; Walkerdine 1986; Casey 1990). The primary teaching workforce in India has been dominated by men but, as Table 5.1 shows, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of women employed in Karnataka as government primary school teachers. Recent estimates suggest that almost half the workforce is female. In addition to changing social perspectives on women's participation in paid labour, the increasing number of Indian women in teaching might be traced to development policies such as the Operation Blackboard scheme of the 1990s which encouraged at least one female teacher to be employed in each primary school. Gendered stratification persists within the primary teaching workforce; in the schools I visited, leadership positions were more often occupied by men, and classroom teachers of younger students more likely to be women. For example, 35 of the 42 officially assigned head teacher positions in the *taluk*

Table 5.1 Percentage of women government primary school teachers employed in Karnataka

1966–1967	1977–1978	1986–1987	1993–1994	1997–1998	2007 estimates[a]
22.27%	28.32%	35.28%	40.88%	43.6%	48%

Sources: UNESCO (2002)
[a]GoK (2008)

(administrative block) were filled by men, and in the 16 schools participating in the study, 31 of the 45 lower primary positions (teachers of standards 1–5) were filled by women.

When I interviewed women teachers about their stories of entering the profession, many described the ways in which teaching offered suitable work environments for women compared to other types of work. The following accounts show how some teachers had ambitions to train in other professions (such as medicine and engineering) but were encouraged by their families to take up teaching. In particular, teaching was constructed as a 'respected' profession and especially 'good for ladies' (Box 5.3).

As more women enter primary teaching, questions around the 'feminisation' of teachers' work in the Indian context and its implications for the status of the profession are likely to become increasingly pertinent. Already, child-centred reforms in India have utilised maternal discourses to conceptualise teacher–student relations, suggesting that teachers' work is seen as 'good for ladies' not only in terms of work conditions but also with respect to the pedagogic expectations of teaching young children. The ways in which such maternal discourses are recontextualised by teachers in classrooms are explored in Chapter 6.

5.3 The Moral Authority and Social Status of Teaching

Within schools and classrooms, teachers' work is shaped by social practices which do not always sustain institutional expectations and reform ideals. As we saw, child-centred discourses constructed the 'good' teacher as being committed to a democratic, less hierarchic relationship with students. However, when speaking about their work, the teachers I interviewed also drew on moral discourses that emphasised hierarchic social relations. As a snapshot of teachers' backgrounds, all 22 participants in this study had themselves attended government primary schools, 13 had grown up in rural areas, and in discussions such as those above we learned of the economic hardships that many experienced. Thus, to some extent, some teachers may have lived in rural community contexts not too dissimilar to those of their current students.

However, the social distance between teachers and their students was in other ways marked. Table 2.3 in Chapter 2 shows that a majority of teachers in this study (13 out of 22) were from upper or dominant caste backgrounds (Brahmin, Lingayat, Vokkaliga, or Koorgi). About half the students enrolled across the 16 schools were

Box 5.3 Women's Perspectives on Entering the Teaching Profession

Arathi:	[in response to Saira's earlier comment that she had wanted to become a doctor] Why did your mother want you to become a teacher?
Saira:	Why?…For me, doctor…means…I liked it. 'Let me be a doctor, in our family all are teachers', that's what I said. But *their* [her family's] idea was: 'you will get a job quickly', that's all. But also, in our case, there is *purdah*…in other jobs there are all gents [men]…But here, we are in one room separately. But in other jobs, there it may get late, or we may have to sit in the middle of everybody…but this is one good respected profession. They [her family] agreed, because we are with the children, and we don't have to do any such thing like night duty. So it would be good for us. (Saira *LC* K2)

In my family, we were ten members…my parents, and my elder brother and sisters…all together… there were ten of us. Out of ten, it was only me who had done the TCH. The reason I did the TCH was [that] I had completed my SSLC…My elder brothers didn't want me to go for the TCH yet, because my two elder sisters were married and there were some problems there. They thought it was best that I didn't get married [straight away], so they sent me to college [PUC]. Then after [that] my father sent me for the TCH thinking that in future it will be a help in my life. TCH profession means…it is good for ladies… (Anitha *LC* K1)

I didn't have any this thing [intention] to do the TCH, I wanted to be an engineer. I applied in a polytechnic, near Madapatna, and when I applied three girls were selected, and in that, even I was selected. But they said that the posting will be given in Hassan, but my father didn't want to send me there because it was so far. I was a young girl, right? But my mother would tell me: 'what will you do staying at home? I have had to work so hard [at home], don't follow that, always girls should stand on their own legs', like this for *all* us children she used to advise us. But I didn't go for the [engineering] degree, but in Madapatna there was a primary school, it was an LPS [lower primary school], so I began to give this [teaching] a thought… (Sundari *LC* K6)

categorised as either Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste. Similar patterns of the social distance between students and teachers in government schools have been reported at the state level. Data suggest only 14% of elementary school teachers (standards 1–7) in Karnataka are from either Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste communities (NUEPA 2008). Other markers of the social distance between teachers and their rural students were related to teachers' upwardly mobile and urban positions. The school-aged children of teachers in this study were enrolled in fee-paying urban or semi-urban private schools, almost all with English medium instruction. The government system within which teachers themselves worked was not seen as desirable for their own children's education.

Teachers' work is enmeshed in social relations and practices which extend beyond the institutional principles of the school. For example, Sarangapani's (2003) ethnography of schooling revealed how dominant discourses about the moral authority of teaching in India are connected to folk and local theories of student–teacher relations, for example, adult–child, parent–child, *guru–shishya*, and patron–protégé

Table 5.2 Sarangapani's (2003) models of Indian teacher–student relationships

Teacher–student relationship	Social practices
Adult–child	The adult is 'naturally' placed ahead of the child in matters relating to knowledge of the adult world and is also in a position to exercise power over the child
Parent–child	Like the parents' actions, the teacher's actions are benevolent, keeping the child's best interests at heart, even if these actions involve disciplining and punishing the child. The child must give the same respect and unquestioned obedience to the teacher as she/he would to her/his parents
Guru–shishya	The teacher is the spiritual knower/teacher, or *guru*, and the student is the *shishya*, or disciple. The true student reveres his/her guru with the utmost obedience and respect
Teacher as patriot/martyr	The teacher is a 'good citizen', someone who has sacrificed her/his life and who works selflessly for the betterment of society and the nation
Patron–protégé	The teacher is considered to occupy a more culturally elite position and is thus positioned as a benevolent patron

Adapted from Sarangapani (2003:108–121)

relationships and patriot/martyr subjects (see Table 5.2). I draw on Sarangapani's schema to discuss how teachers in this study conceptualised the authority relations in schools and the implications of these relations for child-centred expectations of teachers' work.

Teachers often gestured towards these authority relations when they reflected on what 'being a teacher' meant to them. For example, Saraswathi, an upper-caste standard 1 teacher, repeatedly drew on spiritual and duty-oriented notions of teaching during our interviews and her informal discussions with me. She frequently described her work as a noble or 'pure' service.

> The teacher's profession is the purest profession compared to *all* other professions. *Anadhana, rakthadhana* [the gifts of food and blood], just how these two are very important, even *vidyadhana* [the gift of knowledge] is also *so* important…If we guide him [the student] [about] the way to lead his life…in future, he should be a good human being. (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

Here, the teacher is positioned as a guide for the student, helping her become 'a good human being'. The *guru* in pre-colonial Indian ashram education was usually a male Brahmin who held great authority and commanded considerable respect. Sarangapani (2003) described the vedic construction of the *guru* as 'a religious, spiritual knower/teacher. His authority springs from being closer to God and salvation. The student is cast as his disciple' (Sarangapani 2003:112). In a study conducted by Kale (1970), Indian secondary school teachers were found to draw on notions of the *guru* when fashioning their professional identities. It signified 'a broad spectrum of meaning – from the teacher in the pedagogic sense to the spiritual guide and mentor' (Kale 1970:371). More recently, Kumar (2005) observed how 'the idea of the teacher as an object of worship finds frequent mention in literature right up to this day' (Kumar 2005:90).

When the teachers in this study drew on the image of the guru to describe their professional role, the authority associated with this position was legitimised through the perceived 'backwardness' of the community. In the account below, Mahendra, a dominant-caste teacher, spoke clearly of his position as a contemporary guru. This is one of the reasons he enjoyed teaching, especially when he worked in the remote area of HD Kote before coming to Mallige cluster.

> I like this job more than other jobs. Why? Because they give more respect. In HD Kote, when we go into the street, everyone wishes us *namaste*. Because it was a backward area. There, they [parents] would say, 'He is a *guru* to our children, so he is a *guru* to us also. He has come to our area and he is doing good work. He is educating our children'. This is a little [more] forward place…so respect is a little bit less. (Mahendra *LC* K3)

Through Mahendra's comments, we can infer the relational position of teachers with respect to the different communities in which they work. The construction of the *guru* is understood by Mahendra as more enduring in HD Kote 'because it was a backward area'. Mahendra noted that the respect for teachers is a 'little bit less' in the 'forward place' of his current work in Mallige cluster. These comments also position the teacher as a 'patron'; Sarangapani observed that 'when the teacher regarded himself as culturally more elite than his student, a relationship of benevolent patronage operated' (2003:116). Indeed, as another teacher interviewed, Sudharani, explained, teachers' possession of specialised ('educated') knowledge influenced the community's expectation of them.

> If parents are educated, they will come and ask: 'you have not done this lesson for my child'. If the child goes home and complains that this teacher is not doing the lesson, they will come and ask. But here, there are not so many educated people. So here they won't ask. They just expect us to do [teach]. (Sudharani *NK* M3)

Both Sudharani and Mahendra positioned themselves as 'educated' persons entering the community to teach. Another interesting aspect of the social distance between teachers and their rural students is that none of the teachers in this study lived in the village in which they worked, though some resided in nearby towns.

During interviews and discussions, many teachers also described their work as a selfless service or a national service, thereby reflecting what Sarangapani (2003) called a 'patriot/martyr' teacher identity. Discourses of self-sacrifice were mobilised to position teachers as working for national development and social betterment. When we consider this position alongside teachers' earlier accounts of the economic motivations for teaching, the multiple, shifting nature of teachers' subjectivity is revealed. Sarangapani noted how the patriot/martyr construction 'carried a moral authority akin to the authority that Brahmin teachers of the past possessed by virtue of renouncing all claims to property' (2003:115). In my study, Rajesh and Anitha articulated similar ideals:

> The opportunity that we have, it is really a thankful job. It is a *pure* profession. More than the salary, if what we have taught to children remains in children's minds…that itself is everything to us. (Rajesh *NK* M2)

> I have a lot of love for our leaders and our nation. Our country…I am proud of our country. Overall, I like to say that what I am doing is a small service[2] to my nation. It is a small service. That's it… (Anitha *LC* K1)

The 'reflexive' and 'democratic' expectations of teachers as 'facilitators' in the *Nali Kali* and *LC* reforms imply a weakened boundary between teachers and students. However, being a preserver of values (how to be a 'good human being'), an educated patron ('s/he has come to our area and s/he is doing good work'), and a selfless worker for the nation ('it is a *pure* profession') maintains teachers' moral authority over students. The implementation of new pedagogic ideals is far from straightforward; teachers are negotiating multiple pedagogic and social positions.

Despite teachers' assertions of their moral authority and even their *guru* status, the relatively low status of their social position was also articulated during interviews. Radhamani explicitly drew attention to the poor social status of teachers in Indian society, which exists not least because of the low value accorded to working with young rural children.

> Society will look at a teacher very dismissively. I am talking about the whole society. Here in [the] village, since we teach their children, they will give [us] respect. But outside…the level is…it has developed like that. Teachers mean '*Ayyo*…what can these people do? These are people who are going to teach children'. This type of careless attitude in society is there. Teachers mean [*in a dismissive tone*] 'they will go to [the] village and teach to children'. But people who work in offices, their level is more. But school work, especially for people who work in primary schools, will not be given much respect in society. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

Radhamani positioned 'office' work, with its urban middle-class association, as being on a different 'level' to teaching. Her reflections on the position of primary teachers will not come as a surprise to many readers, as teachers – particularly of younger children – have low professional status in many countries.

Some of the teachers in the study also talked about the declining status of teachers even within the village community. For example, Lalitha was particularly critical of the School Development Management Committee (SDMC) in her small village of mainly agricultural labourers. SDMCs consist of elected representatives of parents from the local community who are to be involved in bureaucratic and organisational matters such as supervising school facilities, managing budgets, and planning functions. As part of the state's strategy to improve community involvement in schools, SDMCs were to be established for each government primary school in Karnataka. The Committees were seen as the official interface between the home and the school and were intended to provide an opportunity for the community to have some purchase on school matters. SDMCs, however, do not necessarily engage directly with issues of classroom teaching and learning. On one hand, the nature of this home–school interface in the communities seemed to keep intact the authority of teachers' specialised knowledge concerning academic or pedagogic matters.

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[2] The phrase *alilu seve* has been translated here as 'small service'. The literal translation is 'squirrel service'.

On the other hand, the weakening of the home–school boundary threatened to destabilise the teacher's position as a figure of respect and authority. I quote Lalitha at length as she articulated her frustrations with detail.

> If you have to look at teachers, it was good earlier. Madam [the head teacher, who has walked into the room] would know better! Tell, madam! Why first there was respect. Wherever the teacher goes, they used to say, [*in an awed tone*] 'Ooh, you are a teacher!', like that. After this, the SDMC was formed. After the School Betterment Committee was started, respect for teachers has gone down by 90 per cent. Why? Because they will have their own problems, and they will just put it on the school teachers. One child's problems they will point out and they will blame all teachers, saying they are 'like this, like that'. After SDMC, we don't get much respect. An uneducated person stands and questions us, saying, 'Where are you going? What are you doing?' It has come to that level. There is no respect. They sit somewhere and simply scold us. We have heard with our own ears the bad words they use to scold teachers. So much respect has gone down. With the SDMC, there is a bit of a problem. If it wasn't there, everything would run smoothly. All they do is keep watching the teachers: 'When is this teacher going, and when is this teacher coming? What they are doing?' Only that they are watching. Only negative things are [focused on] more. There is nothing about the positive things. If we go there and ask them to help the school, there is no response. Instead of that, they will start [going on about] something else. There is no respect for teachers like [there was] earlier, that, too, for primary teachers. They just say, 'Oh, you are just a primary teacher!' Like that it has happened. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

The distinction between the teacher and the 'uneducated' villager is marked in Lalitha's comment that 'an uneducated person stands and questions us'. As I discuss later in this chapter, teachers' work was tightly regulated by the bureaucratic structure of schools; Lalitha described how new forms of accountability to, and expectations from, the local community have further challenged teachers' authority and status. She revealed how a weakened hierarchy between teachers and the community can be met with unease or resistance by teachers. This tension is of particular significance to educational reforms which, like *Nali Kali* and *LC*, rely on more open relationships between communities and schools.

The educational background of teachers was also relevant to the perception of their low social status in the wider community. The TCH initial teacher training was not a degree-level course and could be completed after standard 10. (Initial teacher education in Karnataka now requires the completion of standard 12.) The expansion of higher education, and the privileging of science and technology in school and college curricula, positions the education 'level' of teachers as relatively low. Many teachers seemed to lack confidence in their professional abilities even though their child-centred practices required considerable skills and knowledge. Saraswathi, for example, described the 'low' educational status of teachers during a discussion about the knowledge demands of what she called 'the computer age'.

> In reality, I want to say our own education itself is very low. When *our* education is low, what are we able to do?…Nowadays, children's levels are also high, even in a government school. So we are feeling it is very difficult to teach them to that level. Some teachers now have done their PUC [Std 12] and have studied science. They have done their CET [common entrance test]. Some have done their double degrees. So many schools have got such type[s] of teachers. All those teachers are doing well. But if you look back, that is, to us, we have just done our SSLC and TCH. So when it is like that, it is not possible to teach in a higher way. We know that our ability is less. (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

Earlier Saraswathi had described teachers as moral guides and teaching as a ‘pure’ profession. The anxiety she then expressed regarding the education of teachers not being sufficient for them to teach ‘in a higher way’ and keep up with knowledge demands ‘even in a government school’ shows that she is working through multiple positions of status and authority.

Savitha also spoke about changes in her work and how the increased ‘pressure’ of the teaching job, the greater ‘direction’ placed upon her teaching, and the challenges of working with ‘neglected’ children had not led to an elevated social status. She described the relatively low social status of teachers in spite of the challenging task of teaching.

> Nowadays, we are getting more pressurised for things which will be useful for rural children. For teachers, they are telling [us], ‘No, you have to do this. If you don’t do it, it won’t work’. That type of pressure will be there. And for teaching, they are giving more and more direction. Previously, children were not so neglected…so now teachers are getting pressurised. But still, I don’t feel that teachers have got so much respect as doctors or engineers. They have got more! (*Laughs, then says with quiet seriousness*) We haven’t got so much… (Savitha *NK* M1)

The changing knowledge demands of the ‘computer age’ (as termed by Saraswathi) place increasing pressure on teachers. Teachers are required to deliver outputs determined by the state (‘things which will be useful for rural children’, as Savitha put it) in addition to reform expectations of being a ‘reflexive’ and ‘personable’ facilitator. In light of teachers’ perceptions of the relatively low social status of their work and of the seeming threat to their authority (for example, through their accountability to the SDMCs), we might understand teachers’ moral authority discourses as an attempt to restore or hold on to their social and professional standing. In the next section, I discuss the struggle of child-centred reforms to reposition the teacher as a ‘facilitator’ in the face of increasingly strong state regulation of teachers’ work.

5.4 The Regulation of Teachers’ Work

A strongly framed bureaucratic culture regulates teachers’ work in Karnataka government schools, establishing explicit hierarchic relations in the school system. Within schools and clusters, teachers are primarily accountable to the head teacher and the Cluster Resource Person, as well as to the SDMC. Block Education Officers and district officers also monitor and inspect teachers’ work, as do officials from outside the government structure. Mukhopadhyay (2009) has discussed the ‘dysfunctionality’ of the primary education bureaucratic system in Karnataka, arguing that teachers are offered little academic support despite expectations to reform their classroom practices. Drawing on ethnographic observations of bureaucratic processes, Mukhopadhyay (2009:177) showed how the structures set in place to regulate teachers’ work in Karnataka government schools were focused on administrative and infrastructural matters.

> [A]cademic dimensions of school processes, be it assessment of learning levels of children or the monitoring of effectiveness of teachers' training and post-training changes in classroom practices…translate into routinized activities. The priority of enabling a learning environment gives place to drilling the children for expected testing formats…while that of mentoring teachers subsequent to training cedes priority to inspections, particularly of material facilities.

Mukhopadhyay's research revealed how academic support for Karnataka government primary school teachers was minimal and how the priorities of the education bureaucracy could even militate against the ideals of child-centred reforms seeking to reposition teachers as 'facilitators'.

Indeed, the inspectorial culture of schools emerged as a key site of tension for the teachers I interviewed. Some teachers expressed their frustration at how the monitoring and inspection of teachers' work disregarded their pedagogic efforts. For example, Radhamani vividly described officers' lack of constructive feedback, their impatience, lack of respect, and lack of consideration of children's progress. She began, however, by affirming that the monitoring of teachers is necessary:

> It is a necessity. But if officers come, they just point out the mistakes. No one will say, 'You have done this. This is correct. And you have to improve more'. They will just search what the mistakes we have done. What they should do is, instead of searching [for] mistakes, they should come as a guide to us. 'You improve like this, you develop like [this]', they should tell us patiently. They should have the quality in them to listen to us. These officers will not have that politeness. They don't have the patience to listen to us. 'Oh! Why you have done like this? You should do like this.' They just go on telling like this. They don't care even if other people are there around us. They just tell to teachers in front of everybody. That's one thing I don't like. Officers should come as a guide. They should tell us, 'You improve much more. If you adopt this, you can see [the] children's progress'. We like them to be like this. If officers come, they show their status. They treat teachers as a peon. That's not good. They should respect us and tell us, 'Adopt this method and achieve much more progress. We will provide enough facilities for you'. They should tell [us] this. But as soon as they come, they come inside and just find out the mistakes. They will hassle us. And in front of children if they hassle [us], what will children feel? They won't respect us and they will think, 'Oh, somebody had come. They told like this to [the] teacher'. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

The inspectorial culture described here failed to recognise teachers' professional knowledge and decision-making capabilities. The education bureaucracy was seen to pay little attention to teachers' development of, and reflection on, their pedagogic strategies. As Radhamani described it, the system was particularly concerned with searching for teachers' inadequacies, rather than supporting or guiding them to improve classroom practices.

Below, Savitha describes how she felt pulled between the demands of such inspectorial cultures and the *Nali Kali* child-centred reform ideals. She was expected to use *Nali Kali* activity-based learning cards. However, government officers were more concerned about the 'level' students reached rather than the learning-though-activity processes. Savitha explains how it was easier for teachers to teach the syllabus content directly (and hence be more accountable under the inspectorial system) rather than to teach according to the *Nali Kali* activity-based method and 'wait' for children to learn. In this example, the child-centred ideals of activity-based learning were reworked through the demands of the inspectorial system:

> Now, we have books and cards…now, those [officers] who come, they will first ask, 'Which card and which level are you at? Has the child reached that level?' First, they will ask us about cards, 'Have you given the cards? Are the children learning?' So instead of waiting for the *children* to learn, it will be easy for us if we teach them the cards. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Child-centred reform ideals of learning through activity were likely to be difficult to achieve within a system characterised by strong bureaucratic structures of monitoring and assessment. The presence of officers seemed to militate against the ethos of the child-centred reforms in these schools. Many teachers understood the inspectorial system as necessary for promoting teacher motivation and accountability, but some expressed a desire for greater autonomy within the classroom. Shivanna, an *LC* teacher in Kamala cluster, contended that teachers must broadly follow the government mandates, but that this requirement should not diminish their freedom within the classroom to make professional decisions.

> What we do *in* the class, [for that] *we* have freedom. Whatever they tell [us]…we can't say no. But in *our* school, whatever the opportunities we have, we use it and we will teach. Because officers, the whole year, they can't sit in front of us. They will come, we will tell our problems, they will note them down, and they will go. But *we* are the people who, all 365 days, will be in front of our children, so *we* can have freedom to teach the lesson. (Shivanna *LC* K9)

Teachers' pedagogic autonomy in relation to the child-centred reforms needed to be negotiated within the government's system, as Jayakumara, a *Nali Kali* teacher in Mallige cluster, explained:

> …means, that opportunity is not there, right? We can't do it in *our* own method…what the government says, we should do, right? What rules that the government has, we should follow. We should adopt it, and we should teach, right? We are not able to teach on our own. If it is like that, each will be having different methods…everyone would do simply as they wished. That is not right. (Jayakumara *NK* M4)

The managerial cultures governing teachers' work positioned teachers as state functionaries. The teachers in Mallige and Kamala clusters were required to negotiate this position alongside the ideals of child-centred reforms which sought to recast them as active, reflexive facilitators.

This chapter set out to explore some of the social and institutional contexts of teachers' work in order to better understand their task of implementing *Nali Kali* and *LC* pedagogies in schools. For example, the chapter described how recruitment processes, teachers' accounts of career entry, and the multiple authority relations of teaching elaborate what 'being a teacher' can mean beyond child-centred notions of the personable, democratic, maternal, and reflexive 'good teacher'. The relatively low social status of teachers described by participants in the study reveals the discordance between the complex demands made by the reforms process and the social positions of teachers. Strong controls were maintained over teachers' work through bureaucratic systems, which positioned teachers as functionaries of the state rather than as reflexive practitioners. I have attempted to show how teachers' work in India is shaped by social practices which often extend beyond reform directives and institutional principles. Policy and research needs to engage with the social struggles of educational reform – the ways in which the multiple meanings of 'being a teacher' create conditions through which reform ideals are negotiated and reworked. With this in mind, I turn now to consider how teachers in Mallige and Kamala clusters constructed the rural child and constituted their pedagogic relationships by reworking *Nali Kali* and *LC* child-centred ideals.

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Chapter 6
Educating the Rural Child

This chapter examines the ways in which education for rural students has been understood by teachers in India, especially in light of the new expectations of students emphasised in child-centred reforms. In Chapter 4, I explained how *Nali Kali* and *LC* reform ideals constructed the student as 'creative', 'different', 'active', and 'independent' (*NK*), and being able to 'think independently', 'act independently', 'problem solve', 'work in groups', and 'construct meaning' (*LC*). These complex and often highly individualised expectations of the child are in stark contrast to the child's position as passive learner in the textbook-oriented, rote-based pedagogies predominantly found in Indian primary schools. In this chapter, Educating the Rural Child, I show how teachers in Mallige and Kamala clusters understood the role of the school and shaped their expectations of the rural student with respect to new child-centred discourses and the broader social contexts of their work.

The children in the rural primary schools of this study mostly came from farming or agricultural labouring families. According to census figures from 2001, the average literacy rate was just over 50% across the 16 villages I visited in Mallige and Kamala clusters. Nine schools in the study had over 50% of students coming from Scheduled Tribe or Scheduled Caste backgrounds. In the main, students who were from economically better-off families in the villages were sent to private English-medium schools in nearby towns. The rural government primary schools of Mallige and Kamala clusters therefore served the poorest families in the area. Teachers often expressed a mixture of paternalism, romanticism, and sympathy for the rural life that their students' families led. For example, the image of the noble hard-working farmer was evoked – their local knowledge of the land and animals was praised. Villagers were often positioned as innocent, having 'simple' needs, and resisting materialism – a common vice of 'city people' according to one teacher, Saraswathi. Teachers described their sympathy for the economic hardships which villagers endured: drought, the challenges of daily-wage labouring, and being 'cheated' by those with more power.

However, alongside such notions of village life ran an even stronger discourse of rural communities being 'uneducated' and 'backward'. Class and caste discourses were enmeshed in the view that villagers were ignorant, superstitious, and lazy, or

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that they lacked hygiene, culture, civility, technology, education, and discipline. As I discuss in this chapter, the common construction of the ‘uneducated’ home background of students shaped how teachers understood the role of the school in rural communities. Strong boundaries between the home and the school were emphasised by many teachers; the school’s explicit function was to discipline and socialise the ‘uneducated’. I show how the authority relations discussed in Chapter 5 – the teacher as a benevolent patron, disciplinarian, and mother figure – were recontextualised through child-centred reform discourses of, for example, mutual ‘exchange’ and teaching ‘with love’. The chapter also looks at the ways in which teachers working in these reform contexts constructed the ‘good’ student and thereby examines what Bernstein called the ‘regulative’ discourse of pedagogy: that which ‘creates the criteria which give rise to character, manner, conduct, posture, etc. In school, it tells the children what to do, where they can go, and so on’ (Bernstein 2000:34). The student-subject in Mallige and Kamala primary schools was constructed through multiple discourses deriving from reform expectations, the disciplining tradition of schools, and enduring social hierarchies. In the discussion that follows emerge the ways in which pedagogic relationships are social relationships; the chapter intends to show how the *Nali Kali* and *LC* pedagogic reforms aimed to transform deeply hierarchic social relations in rural school communities.

6.1 Educating the ‘Uneducated’

Teachers frequently described villagers and parents in English as ‘uneducated’ or in Kannada as *avidyavantha*, referring to their illiteracy or lack of participation in formal school systems. On many occasions, I was shown how parents were not able to sign their own name when completing their child’s enrolment documents. Instead, they would use a thumbprint to sign. Parents were seen to be unable to provide a home environment for their children that could ‘support’ the activities of the school. This meant that teachers needed to give ‘more attention’ to students. Some teachers took into account the long and hard work hours of agricultural labourers, acknowledging that challenging working conditions made it difficult for parents to be active in their child’s schooling. Mainly, however, it was the lack of school knowledge that was seen to inhibit greater parental involvement in rural children’s education. Consider, for example, the following remarks by teachers:

> In villages, more uneducated people are there. Education is a bit less, and poverty is there. So children are not able to study more. Because everybody goes in the morning for labouring, and comes back in the evening, children are not getting much attention at home. So we [teachers] are giving more attention to children, and that is the only thing that remains with children. Children are not getting attention from parents. And even the school is not getting any support from parents. (Shivanna *LC* K9)

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> At home, if parents are educated, they will teach 'a aa e ee' [the alphabet]. But apart from that, uneducated parents will not teach anything. (Sudharani *NK* M3)
>
> There are very few educated people here. Most of them are uneducated. So, they are not aware. We have to keep informing them bit by bit. What do they know if they don't know any words?! How will they know what the child has written? (Ramesha *LC* K8)

The realities of economic hardship and educational inequalities pose significant challenges for the rural teacher who cannot assume that educational resources (at least, those valued by the school) are available to her students at home. However, teachers oftentimes expressed deterministic notions about the intelligence of the rural child. Some attributed students' supposed inability to excel in school to their 'uneducated' backgrounds. Savitha's comment below shows how the 'uneducated' background of parents in her school was associated with an inheritable lack of intelligence:

> In private school, parents are a bit more intelligent…and children will also be intelligent. So they will send them there. But here, in these government schools, children will come here who don't have anything…they have *nothing* in their minds. Those types of children will be in our school. Since that type of children [is] in our school, to make them to develop, we have to work *hard*. It is not that easy. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Savitha makes a class distinction between children attending government schools and those attending private schools (who are in contrast 'a bit more intelligent'). In this instance, she does not recognise the knowledge and skills in her students' homes, or see such knowledge as relevant to schooling ('they have *nothing* in their minds'). The child as an empty vessel is seen to create additional challenges for teachers ('we have to work *hard.* It is not that easy').

The 'uneducated' background of students identified by their teachers indicated not only a lack of formal schooling, 'intelligence', or literacy in rural areas but also for many teachers, the parents' 'irresponsibility', 'neglect', or lack of 'interest' in school education. For example, teachers described how parents in villages did not make their children attend school regularly or provide students with basic school equipment and clean uniforms. According to one teacher, Mary Vasantha, 'uneducated' parents would use 'superstitious' practices to treat sick children, which would prolong their absence from school. Many children in the area would be taken out of school for long periods to accompany their parents to nearby coffee plantations for seasonal work. Lalitha explained how she felt that parents were being irresponsible by prioritising their work over their child's education:

> See, education should come first from the parents. It's only when that happens that the children also feel that they should study. What is happening now, is that even if the children are interested, because of the irresponsibility of the parents, they can't do much. Parents keep looking at earning money rather than educating their children. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

While teachers often described parents' lack of responsibility for their children's education, teachers would also frequently acknowledge the love, care, and affection given to rural children by their families. The lack of parental interest in prioritising school attendance was even understood in terms of having ‘so much’ love for children:

> Here in villages, since these are farmers’ children, they’ll not be knowing much about discipline or rules…in India, children are given more affection…in India there is *over*-love…love means…there is *so much,* especially in the villages. I even feel that love may affect the children. For instance, if the child doesn’t want to come to school…or if parents want to go somewhere for some festival and they can’t leave their child alone…so what they will do is, they will take the child along with them. They will say ‘the child was crying so I took him. He said he wasn’t going to school so I took him’. So they will give all such types of reasons… (Anitha *LC* K1)

According to Anitha, the lack of discipline or rules in villages leads to the pampering of children and impacts their participation in school. Similarly, Savitha described how teachers needed to handle children very carefully because of the abundance of affection and attachment from families:

> What they’ll [parents] do is they give so much affection, give *so much* attachment to their children. So it is like that. If we [teachers] tell anything to children, the parents say ‘it’s okay, leave it madam, we only have one child, or two children…’ And if parents tell their children something, the children will threaten to leave home. One boy had left home because his father had hit him. The father went and called him back again. We can’t force these present children. We have to talk like we are their mother, to say ‘It’s okay, you come and we’ll teach you’. We have to teach like this, we have to handle them very carefully. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Savitha suggested that the authority relations in rural Indian families are changing, such that children can no longer be ‘forced’ (controlled) by parents, and that this had implications for the relationship between the teacher and student. For example, Savitha described how teachers now needed to talk to students ‘like we are their mother’, taking a gentler approach in their interactions. A closer study of the changing construction of the child and childhoods in Indian rural contexts is required to understand more fully the authority relations suggested here.[1] Savitha gestured towards the new position of the child in the family that recognises their individuality (‘we only have one child…’). Perhaps we might understand this shift in relation to family-planning discourses of the 1990s that emphasised the individual child (for example, through the campaign *we two, ours one*). Other social influences might include the prevalence and popularity of television serials which portray urban middle-class family relations, the growth of ‘child rights’ discourses in development programs, and even the sponsorship of child-centred discourses in schools. These speculations about the changing construction of rural childhoods of course require deeper investigation.

What is not speculative in the comments above, however, is the need for teachers to work through the changing and sometimes competing social relations in the home and in the school. Common notions of the ‘uneducated’ background of rural students established strong boundaries between the home and the school with which teachers grappled during the everyday performance of their work. For example, Stella Gita explained how she felt caught between the need to be patient because of children’s home situations (‘patience’ is an explicit expectation of the ‘good’ *Nali*

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[1] Empirical studies of family and childhood in India include Sarangapani (2003, 2004), Chaudhary (2004), Nita Kumar (2007), and Viruru (2001). Other contributions to understanding family and childhood in India include Kumar (1993), Uberoi (2006), and Kakar (1981).

Kali teacher) and the difficult demands of delivering syllabus 'portions' on time. The scenario she described raises the question of how child-centred ideals of students learning at their 'own pace' might be reshaped in such conditions:

> In learning, nobody will teach them anything at home. For other children there may be tuitions, or they may teach at home…But for these village children, nobody will teach at home, right? They will learn only what *we* teach…They [parents] don't help with homework. The next day, they'll come to school without having done the homework. Since nobody is there to teach at home, I have to understand their situation and I have to teach them…even we should understand their problems. If I beat them and they say 'nobody is there to teach us, what can I do?', poor things, those children will cry…but here [in school], there will be no time or opportunity to teach the portion again. For instance, if we want them to write exercises or if there are ten to twenty question– answers, we'll teach one or two and the remaining we will tell them to try and do it at home. We may tell like this, but nobody will be there to teach them at home. They'll just come back without doing it. So *again* we have to teach them…and it will be a bit of a burden. But we should teach them with patience. (Stella Gita *NK* M4)

Teachers expressed the need to work hard, be persistent, or be patient to overcome the challenge of teaching their rural students from 'uneducated' backgrounds. Sujatha, a standard 1 teacher at Mallige HPS, spoke at length of her difficulties in teaching the alphabet to Ankita, a young girl in her class.[2] Ankita's parents enrolled her 2 months late to school. Sujatha felt that the late entry of Ankita to the school hindered her progress and her interest in lessons. In particular, the freedom and lack of structure in Ankita's home environment was seen by Ankita as contradicting the rules of conduct in the classroom:

> What has happened to her is, she still has the concept of being at home. She was free there… she was playing, she had food, she didn't have any other work. But here, she has to come here, sit here, she has to read, she has to write, she has to sit like this, and has to do like that…if I force her like this…that may be the reason she has lost interest. But now she has learnt four letters, until '*da*'. And see, it has been one month, the end of August. In these twenty five days she has got a little bit of interest. So the reason is her parents' interest… if she had come on June 1st [the first day of the school year], then she wouldn't have been a dull student. So even though my lesson is good, it is her parents' fault that she is not interested. (Sujatha *NK* M1)

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy that Sujatha was expected to use contained an attempt to weaken the teacher's control over classroom interaction through its 'joyful' approach, yet here she emphasises classroom processes which maintain explicit control over Ankita's learning ('she has to read, she has to write, she has to sit like this, and has to do like that'). Sujatha points to the pedagogic tensions involved in teaching students like Ankita, for whom there is a perceived social distance between the home and the school. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990:5) have theorised, the pedagogic 'work' of schools takes on a socialising role, 'the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power'. The greater the distance between cultural arbitraries, the greater the apparent challenge of the pedagogic work. In this case, Sujatha felt that her pedagogic work was cut out for her ('even though my lesson is good') because of Ankita's conflicting 'concept of home'.

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[2] According to school records, Ankita's father had attended school up to standard 3, and her mother had finished up to standard 7. They are farmers from the Nayaka (ST) community. According to Sujatha's descriptions, Ankita's parents are 'uneducated'.

When teachers spoke about educating the 'uneducated', the school was explicitly characterised as a socialising institution. This characterisation was often driven by notions of the rural community as 'uncivilised'. Such deficit concepts of rural communities were used to legitimise the moralising social agendas of the school. For example, as Chandregowda reflected on his 34 years of rural school teaching, he highlighted what he saw as the enduring civilising mission of education. Colonial discourses of education resonated through his descriptions of how rural education had transformed hygiene practices in villages. According to Chandregowda, male villagers now wore trousers ('full-pants') – the mark of the civilised man – instead of shorts ('half-pants'):

> Now they [villagers] are more civilised. It is because of education. They [men] used to wear half-pants, and now they are wearing full-pants. They used to take a bath once in a week. Now they take a bath three times a week and they keep the surrounding[s] clean. Such feelings we put in their mind. And now we are teaching children how to use the toilets in school. By this, children carry the message to the houses that they should be clean and tidy. All these changes are happening. (Chandregowda *LC* K3)

There was a noticeable preoccupation in the interviews with the lack of cleanliness and hygiene in many teachers' descriptions of rural people and children. It is likely that this idea derived from caste-based notions of purity and hygiene. Teachers tended not to draw on explicit caste-based language, however – the more 'acceptable' discourse of social class often shaped their characterisations of rural communities. In Stella Gita's response (below) to my question about the role of the teacher in the rural school, she describes the 'cleanliness' of privately schooled children in the city (signifying the urban middle classes), in contrast to the hygiene of village children. For Stella Gita, the need to teach about presentation and hygiene increased the 'burden' of teachers' pedagogic work, and therefore educating the rural student was 'a bit slow':

> The village children are a bit…less cleanly. We have to work hard to make these children to come clean to school. They won't learn if we only teach it for one day. It takes many days. We have to tell them, 'Wash your face, wash your hands, wear good clothes'. But it is not the same case in the city. I taught in a private school for six months, and it was not necessary for those children to be taught all these things. They come well dressed. But here, children have problems at home. So I say, 'Whatever is there in the home, use it, and come neatly'. We are teaching like this, it is a bit of a burden to teach. But still children will learn. Whether in cleanliness or in education…it might be a bit slow for these village children, but still, they will learn. (Stella Gita *NK* M4)

The emphasis teachers placed on teaching hygiene and cleanliness related to the need to inculcate discipline in rural students. 'Discipline' encompassed a broad range of social conduct. For example, it referred to obedience, respect, piety, personal habits, hygiene and self-presentation, a strong work ethic, and commitment to studying. Govindappa described the lack of discipline and civility among 'backward' villagers, including those he identified as being from dominant or upper-caste backgrounds:

> Govindappa: The people of this village are still a bit backward. All types of caste people are here, like Kurabas, Gowdas, Lingayats, everybody is there, but still people are not *that* civilised. It is a bit less.
>
> Arathi: What do you mean by civilised?

> Govindappa: They don't have discipline. They are not neat. *We* have made children have some discipline when they come to school. They don't wash their clothes or their face, they don't comb their hair, they just come as they are. We are trying our best to avoid all this… (Govindappa *NK* M6)

Such comments construct the school as a socially disciplining institution imposing a cultural arbitrary arguably derived from Hindu caste hierarchies. Disciplining norms were often understood by teachers in terms of their role of producing good 'citizens'. For example, in the comment below, Sundari depicts her work as inculcating discipline and 'good qualities' in children – in the absence of such influences at home, since rural children 'come from a very different environment':

> What they [parents] expect is, they send their children to us thinking that 'they will teach my child well'. First of all what they want is, they want us to build good qualities in their son. Because he has come from a very different environment. When he comes to this [school] environment he should be obedient and disciplined. All these will be taught in school only…They [parents] like for their child to be taught with completeness. And they will expect us to teach their child to be disciplined. 'He won't listen to us, help him to be disciplined in every way' – this is what they ask from us. They want their child to develop *overall* as best as possible. 'He should be a good citizen in future' – this is what they expect from us. (Sundari *LC* K6)

Sundari suggests there is a mutual contract between parents and the teacher ('this is what they expect from us') to help children become 'good' citizens. Similarly, Sarangapani's (2003:101) ethnographic study of schooling in rural north India showed that the school's explicit role of instilling discipline in students was a 'shared belief' held by rural communities and teachers. A disciplined education was seen to prepare and socialise children into the world of adulthood. Such an understanding of the school's civic project can be used to validate strongly framed pedagogic practices. For example, Sujatha, describing the 'rough' undisciplined rural child, explained how teachers needed to instil discipline even if that meant using corporal punishment ('beating', or hitting, often with a bamboo stick). For Sujatha, this was also a strategy that could transmit school knowledge, despite being at odds with child-centred ideals. Her own experiences of corporal punishment as a student legitimised her present role to motivate 'rough' children through highly disciplined instruction:

> Sujatha: These children who have come from village areas have less discipline. They are more rough here, these village children are more rough. They don't have respect for teachers…and school means 'oh, it's just something [unimportant]'. So, for maintaining their discipline, we will beat.
>
> Arathi: When you were a child you grew up in this area. Were you also rough?
>
> Sujatha: Yes, I was! [*laughs*] Oh *so* much! [*laughter continues*] So I used to get beatings and those beatings would make my knuckles swell so much! [*laughs*] I've gotten beaten *so many* times…Because my master [teacher] beat me I started to write *kagunitha* [letters of the alphabet]. I couldn't write *kagunitha*, but he hit me, and it swelled, and the next day I don't know how…but he had beaten me and I had that feeling 'I have to learn'. And I learned this with interest. Definitely because he had beat me, I have learned. (Sujatha *NK* M1)

A number of educational sociologists in both western and Indian contexts have examined institutionalised, overt, and hidden codes in schools which operate via 'deficit' models of the learner (cf. Keddie 1971; Connell 1994; Subrahmanian 2005;

Nambissan 2006). The strong boundaries between the home and the school, the deficit constructions of students' 'uneducated' backgrounds, and the explicit civilising mission of the school described by teachers in my study are not unfamiliar in the Indian context. For example, Krishna Kumar (2007:201) observed that in colonial models of education 'the child's life at home was seen as an impediment to the attainment of goals for which the school was working under the direction of the colonial state'. In different ways, the *Nali Kali* and *LC* child-centred pedagogies aimed to weaken the boundaries between the school and the home, and weaken the pedagogic control over the child. Yet strong boundaries were maintained by the discourse of the 'uneducated' home, and strong forms of pedagogic (social) control continued to be validated through the construction of the undisciplined, uncivilised child. To examine this tension further, I consider how *Nali Kali* and *LC* teachers defined the 'good' student, and the implications of new regulative discourses for the education of the rural child.

6.2 The 'Good' Student

I asked teachers participating in this study how they would describe a 'good' student. My intention was to explore how teachers were recontextualising *Nali Kali* and *LC* ideals about learners, especially in relation to the deficit notions of the rural child discussed above. The regulative discourses of the two pedagogies produced expectations of students which emphasised active, independent, and individual subjectivities (see Tables 4.2 and 4.4 in Chapter 4). Below, I discuss how *Nali Kali* teachers in Mallige schools and *LC* teachers in Kamala schools re-shaped these discourses in their construction of the ideal student-subject.

6.2.1 The 'Good' Nali Kali Student

When *Nali Kali* teachers in Mallige cluster were asked to describe a 'good' student, many highlighted the characteristics such as good listening skills, responsiveness when questioned, rapid knowledge acquisition, regular attendance, neatness, discipline, respect, a co-operative attitude, leadership skills, and motivation.

Box 6.1 Constructing the 'Good Student': *Nali Kali* Teachers

Good student means…Coming neatly to school, listen[ing] carefully to what we teach. They should have listening…They should respond to the questions we ask, give respect to elders and teachers. For elder or younger…brothers and sisters at home, and to classmates… for everybody they should respect. They should see their classmates like they should see [themselves]. Like, not give trouble to them, to pester them…they should not have that type of behaviour. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

A good student means… the child should have good abilities, whatever we say, they should grasp it immediately. Or at least, even if they are slow, they should learn. We will know the

(continued)

Box 6.1 (continued)

character of the child, how the child is learning. And we will observe his other activities to consider him as a good student. (Jayakumara *NK* M4)

Children should have good discipline. And they should progress, and have regular attendance. He should participate in all activities. If they are like this, we will consider him a good student. Together with that, the personality should be good. He should have a cooperative attitude, he should mix with the class…if all these are there, we can say he is a good student. Just if he is good at studies we can't say he is a good student. He should have cooperation, be good at activities, have discipline, if all these are there then he is a good student. (Govindappa *NK* M6)

When he comes to school he should give respect to teachers. Along with this, they should have good leadership. They should keep the school environment good. And they should give awareness to the surroundings of their house. The lessons that we teach, he should learn it quickly. He should take the challenge to learn: 'What the teacher says, I should learn. In the future I should study well, and the education they have given to us should be used in a good way'. This type of mentality should be there. (Sudharani *NK* M3)

They should give respect for elders…they should be knowing how to behave with teachers. It's not necessary that they should learn only lessons…but if he learns all these other things, and if he has good discipline, I feel 'he is a good student'. (Stella Gita *NK* M4)

The socialising role of education was once again emphasised. In particular, teachers foregrounded the socialising work of the school by reinforcing strongly framed teacher–student authority relations. Notions of discipline and respect were especially strong in these responses, and were described in ways that gestured towards *guru-shishya* relations of the student's duty and obedience towards the teacher (see Chapter 5). The 'good' student would recognise the value of the teachers' authority and understand that 'what the teacher says, I should learn'. The 'good' student was also one who is able to learn without delay: 'whatever we say they should grasp it immediately' and 'learn it quickly', reminiscent of the evaluative labels produced in *Nali Kali* documentation of the 'slow' learner and the 'fast' learner. Here, the *pace* of knowledge acquisition explicitly shapes the evaluative criteria of the 'good' student. This focus on the pace of learning requires teachers to recognise all students as learners (as Jayakumara explained, 'even if they are slow, they should learn'). In this characterisation, 'learning' is the assimilation of knowledge which is determined externally and independently of the student (the content of the *Nali Kali* learning cards and the national minimum levels of learning syllabus).

Teachers also described the personal characteristics of the 'good' student. They spoke about the 'personality' of the child, their 'cooperative attitude', their 'character', and how they 'behave with teachers'. In this sense, a student was not seen as 'good' if she was only 'good at studies'. As Stella Gita explained, 'it's not necessary that they should learn only lessons'. Aspects of *Nali Kali* ideals about active learning, group work, independence, and motivation have been interpreted by these teachers. The 'good' *Nali Kali* student was required to have 'leadership' skills, be 'good at activities', 'mix with the class', and be motivated and self-enterprising to 'take the challenge to learn'. Bernstein (2000:68) suggested that the project of western progressive education was to orientate learners towards 'autonomous, non-specialised, flexible thinking, and socially to team work as an active participant'. This view expanded the criteria of success in school to include the relational, social aspects of pedagogic interaction, as reflected in *Nali Kali* teachers' ideals of the 'good' student: the success of a young child in a Mallige school was not only determined by their academic abilities but also by their compliance and respectful behaviour towards the teacher, as well as by the kinds of social competencies valued by progressive discourses (leadership, co-operation, self-enterprise). *Nali Kali* teachers' descriptions of the 'good' student reveal how the pedagogic positioning of the child was multiple and complex.

6.2.2 The 'Good' LC Student

When *LC* teachers in Kamala cluster were asked to describe the 'good' student, their responses were not unlike those of their *Nali Kali* colleagues. *LC* teachers tended to talk about children's discipline, respect, pace of knowledge acquisition,

Box 6.2 Constructing the 'Good Student': *LC* Teachers

A good student means having discipline…means coming to school regularly, and wearing uniform, seeing other children and learning…Now, children will make noise in the class, that is not discipline…In that way, if discipline is there, children will catch what we teach quickly. (Saraswathi *LC* K1).

Good student…children should give respect to us…and we should also be good…Children should mix well with everybody. (Sundari *LC* K6)

They should give respect to teachers. They should be very obedient. Actually, village children…are very polite. They give *more* respect, compared to city children. (Saira *LC* K2)

Good student means, he should have the ability to learn fast, and if he learns fast, he'll learn more…What we say overall is that a child's education is good if learning has happened, and if the children have learnt the lessons well. Some may have not learned, but today we can't say that he is completely 'thick'. We can't measure what their IQ is. We can't even tell who has more and who has less. We shouldn't say he is dull, because he is just a slow learner, that's all. Some are fast, some will learn slowly. We can't specify anything. (Ramesha *LC* K8)

A good student means they should discuss, they should talk, they should ask help from friends and also help. When the child moves around happily in the class, I feel 'oh the child will learn'. The child is getting interest to learn. The child who will not talk or not speak will just stay like that. (Anitha *LC* K1)

In today's level, a good student…today, children themselves will ask, 'What is the meaning of *arasa* [king]? What type of person is *arasa*? Why is that word not used for our parents, why is it only used for a king?' These types of questions will be asked. But for us when we were studying in first standard it was not like that. (Shivanna *LC* K9) speaking skills, ability to mix well with others, helpfulness, and their interest, curiosity, and inquiry in learning.

LC teachers saw the personality and character of students as important in much the same way as did their *Nali Kali* colleagues. The 'good' student was to be 'polite', 'mix well with others', and work 'happily' in class. Like their *Nali Kali* colleagues, *LC* teachers emphasised the students' pace of knowledge acquisition, describing the 'good' student as being able to 'catch what we teach quickly' and having 'the ability to learn fast, and…learn more'. Also captured here is the shift from biological and deterministic notions of student ability and achievement to something that was much harder for teachers to pin down. As Ramesha explained, 'We can't measure what their IQ is. We can't even tell who has more and who has less…We can't specify anything'. The *LC* program produced evaluative labels for students, such as 'engaged learner' and 'independent learner': the 'good' student in this context needed to do more than just acquire knowledge quickly. It was perhaps the expanded set of evaluative criteria which Ramesha grappled with.

There was, however, a difference between the ways *Nali Kali* and *LC* teachers constructed the 'good' student. The *LC* reform emphasised the importance of dialogue and discussion in the classroom. This seemed to shape teachers' expectations of students: communication and interaction were emphasised. The 'good' student was to be proactive and reciprocal, to help others, and to also 'ask help from friends'. In class, students 'should discuss, they should talk'. Curiosity and inquiry were to drive pedagogic interactions, so that 'children themselves will ask'. This was a significant departure from models of passive learner. At the same time, teachers emphasised the socialising, disciplining function of the school, and this in turn implied strong controls over pedagogic relationships. However, teachers were definitely reworking *LC* expectations of the student to recognise the place in schools for more democratic, weakly controlled classroom talk.

Deficit constructions of the rural child (as uncivilised or uneducated) continued to legitimise the disciplining role of the school and the authority of the teacher. However, teachers were also working with new child-centred expectations of valuing each individual child (as a 'joyful' and 'communicative' learner). How did teachers recontextualise these multiple discourses with respect to their pedagogic relationships in classrooms?

6.3 *Nali Kali* and *LC* Classroom Relations

The child-centred reforms in Mallige and Kamala schools were to bring about a radical transformation of social relations in schools. In the analysis that follows, I examine the ways in which teachers negotiated the authority relations in classrooms with respect to the new models of the 'joyful' and 'communicative' learner.

6.3.1 Teaching the Nali Kali Child 'with Love'

The *Nali Kali* program wanted to address the 'fearful' environment of primary schools, characterised by firm controls over learning (like the use of corporal punishment and strongly framed 'question-answer' drills). The relation between the teacher and the student was reconceptualised through an emphasis on 'joyful' learning interactions:

> Children should learn with joy and learning should be independent. There should not be any pressure. Children should be mentally free. They should not have pressure like 'learn only this, write only this'. They should not have in their mind that [*fearful tone*] 'I am learning'. They should learn with joy and happiness. 'Joyful learning', this is the system they brought. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

> Now what the government is doing is, it is giving more preference to joyful learning. Children should not feel heavy in any way. They should learn freely. In that mode, we should do lessons and teaching. So, what it will happen is, learning should happen through playing games. This is [the] government's ambition. (Rajesh *NK* M2)

In Radhamani's description of how learning is a natural process, such that the child 'should not have in their mind' that they are involved in a pedagogic interaction, are present Bernstein's notions of an 'invisible' pedagogy in which the rules that govern pedagogic interaction are made implicit. A weak framing (or control) of pedagogic interaction is suggested, whereby 'learning should happen through playing games'.

The weakened framing over classroom interaction was understood by some teachers as attempting to weaken the boundary between the home and the school by making the school be like a 'home'. Sujatha described the 'home environment' which she was to create in her class. This involved making pedagogic interactions implicit through the use of activities, and a weakened control over the child in the classroom:

> They have taught us how to teach children using activities. The child will not come here thinking that he is going to learn, like: 'They are doing the lesson, so I have to come and listen here'. There is something of a home environment here now. We'll let them be independent… (Sujatha *NK* M1)

Teachers were therefore required to re-imagine their relationships with their students. Interestingly, many of the *Nali Kali* teachers in this study (seven out of eleven) spoke about the need to teach their young rural learners with 'love' (*preethi*). This was a gendered discourse, with only women teachers explicitly using the language of 'love' (especially a maternal love) to describe their relationship with students. For example, Savitha described how 'we should look after our children with love and affection', and 'talk like we are their mother'.

Teaching 'with love' was understood by many teachers I interviewed as a pedagogic strategy in the *Nali Kali* classroom. As Sabina described the practice, its intention was to foster a happy, encouraging classroom rather than a fearful one:

> First we should attract the children towards us. We shouldn't [*acts out beating motion*] which makes children [*scared facial expression*]. So what we should do is, with love, [*changes to a gentle tone*] we should call them. So then children will feel, 'Oh, our miss is looking after us with love'. So our children will like to learn whatever we teach without

> fear, and with happiness. If we say [*harsh tone*] 'Hey!' and take a stick, they feel, '*Ayyoy*, miss will beat us'…so even if they know the right thing to say they will be too scared to say. The more the fear, the more the learning won't come. How much love we teach them with… for instance, there is one card…we'll tell them about it four or five times…we'll make them read it well. Then we will tell them to write. Then children will learn happily. But if we make them scared a lot, because of the fear, they don't learn all that they are able to learn… This was taught in our training…in *Nali Kali* training. (Sabina *NK* M5)

For Sabina, teaching 'with love' was meant to develop encouraging teacher–student relationships so that students would 'like to learn whatever we teach them'. While teaching 'with love' signified a more gentle interaction between the student and teacher, it did not always imply a weakened control over the selection, sequence, or pacing of knowledge in pedagogic interactions. The teacher's authority over the pedagogic interaction could be maintained through parent–child authority relations. As Sarangapani (2003:111) suggests, 'the structure of the Indian family set-up gives parents, especially the father, absolute authority over the child'.

Sudharani explained how showing 'a bit of love' to her young learners developed an open (weakly framed) student–teacher relationship ('they'll mix well with us'), but that this did not necessarily preclude the use of corporal punishment as an explicit form of pupil control:

> Whatever we do, if we show *a bit* of love to them, they'll mix well with us. However much we scold or beat, if we talk to them with *a bit* of love, they'll forget it… (Sudharani *NK* M3)

Indeed, children were frequently hit with a bamboo stick in Mallige classrooms, despite the *Nali Kali* stance against corporal punishment. Sujatha even described how she understood 'beating' as a valid strategy for transmitting knowledge to her students. In her comment (below), the child-centred focus on individual students' needs is recontextualised through discourses of 'care' and 'love'. Sujatha emphasised her best intentions for the interests of her young learners – the child must learn 'at any cost'. This constructed a close and perhaps even parental relationship between teachers and students, a tough love, even. This relationship legitimised strong forms of control over students, including the use of corporal punishment when other methods of teaching hadn't 'worked out':

> If the teacher beats, it doesn't mean that they do not love. If the teacher has love towards the child, and they want the child to learn at any cost, to develop discipline, that is why they will beat. Nobody will beat just for the sake of it. If they don't love, they don't beat. They care for that child, thinking, 'Somehow, I should teach this child how to go the right and good way. He should learn well'. They have love towards the child. So *this* method…any method…if they have used all the methods, but it hasn't worked out, at least he might learn through *this* method [of hitting]. So that is why they will beat. (Sujatha *NK* M1)

Here, teaching 'with love' does not always signify a weaker framing over pedagogic interactions or play out deficit assumptions about rural students who needed to be shown how to 'go the right and good way'. In this sense, these teachers were reshaping their relationship with students through child-centred discourses as well as through the socialising, disciplining function of schools.

Of course, not all teachers used the notion of 'love' to construct the student–teacher relationship in the same way. Radhamani, a teacher of standards 1–3 in a small Mallige school, spoke about the ideals of a maternal relationship in ways that did not also emphasise the maintenance of the teacher's firm authority over the child, even as a parallel of parental discipline. She was the only *Nali Kali* teacher I interviewed who explicitly spoke about respecting students' opinions and the importance of social equality in the classroom. She described how teachers should 'love' each student 'like their own children' and that all students, 'poor or rich', must be treated in the same way:

> …a teacher should look after the children and should build the relationship with them the same like their own children. A relationship is there, right? They should be good with children. The child may be poor or rich or whichever child it may be. The teacher should love, have faith and patience with the child. Teacher should have patience. That character should be there in teachers. That is required in the teacher. Every child's problem…if the child is telling something to us, we must have patience to listen to them. We should respect the child's opinion. We should not neglect and think, '*Ayyo!* This child is just telling something [irrelevant/incorrect]!' We should try to know every child's opinion. How is the child learning? How will they be at home? (Radhamani *NK* M3)

Radhamani's account of the teacher–student relationship suggests a weakening of home/school boundaries along the lines of *Nali Kali* ideals: she suggests teachers needed to be sensitive to students' home contexts and not neglect their problems. Teachers were also to reconsider their authority over school knowledge, 'to have the patience to listen' and get to know 'every child's opinion'. Sensitivity, respect, and equality were foregrounded over the deficit accounts of rural children that many other teachers used to strengthen their authority in classrooms. The case illustrates the possibility for child-centred discourses to be recontextualised, even through the language of 'love', in ways that acknowledge democratic social relations in schools.

While male teachers in Mallige did not explicitly draw on the notion of 'love', they too spoke about new constructions of the teacher–student relationship in their *Nali Kali* classrooms. Govindappa described how teachers were now encouraged to sit on the floor with their students because this helped pedagogic interactions become more 'free' and less fearful:

> What happened is…*Nali Kali* came…right? After *Nali Kali*, we started sitting with children. We'll sit with children. Before, we used to sit in a chair and all children would sit *[points to the floor of the room]*. But now, we will sit with children. They don't have fear now, they feel that 'oh, our master is sitting with us'. So that fear is not there now. And we have let them be free…to talk freely. And we'll make them dance and sing. And since we do all this, that fear has gone between us [teachers and students]. And, this is helpful for children's learning also…because we are free with them, right? We don't beat them, so there will be no fear for children. (Govindappa *NK* M6)

The physical organisation of classes (the teacher sitting on the floor with their students) and the introduction of songs and dance were some of the strategies the *Nali Kali* program designed to encourage more democratic and 'joyful' classroom relations. Govindappa recognised the transformation of teacher–pupil authority relations that were intended by such strategies. The 'free' interactions he described indicate a weakened framing, but how far do such interactions challenge the socially deficit assumptions of rural students which were so prevalent in teachers' discussions? By sitting on the floor with students and refusing to use corporal punishment, teachers like Govindappa are successfully implementing reform ideals. However, in Radhamani's account (above), respect, patience, and social sensitivity were also important in understanding a more democratic teacher–student relationship. Such characteristics were often underplayed or absent in teachers' descriptions of classroom relations, and one cannot assume that they necessarily follow (or drive) teachers' implementation of *Nali Kali* strategies or their interpretation of child-centred ideals. The recontextualisation of discourses of 'love' used to validate corporal punishment and bolster teachers' firm authority is a case in point.

What becomes clear in this analysis is the need for educational reformers to directly address the multiple social relations through which teachers are constantly working in schools. The pedagogic expectations of the 'joyful' student in the *Nali Kali* program required a major transformation of social relations in classrooms, not easily achieved given the deficit models of rural learners, the disciplining role of the school, and the maintenance of teachers' firm control over pedagogic interactions. The competing regulative discourses about educating the rural child – and the conditions which produce and strengthen these discourses – need much more attention if the democratic intentions of *Nali Kali*, and child-centred reforms more broadly, are to reconfigure enduring social hierarchies in classrooms.

6.3.2 'Exchanging Thoughts' with the LC Child

The *LC* reform also sought to transform the dynamics of classroom interaction. As I examined in Chapter 4, the program involved a discussion-based pedagogy which recognised and drew upon children's communicative and analytic abilities. Official *LC* regulative discourses expected students to 'discuss', 'explain', 'create', 'evaluate', 'analyse', 'remember', 'listen', 'make opinions', and 'ask critical questions'. In this sense, the *LC* model was to reconfigure students' relationship to school knowledge, working with a more explicit constructivist agenda than the *Nali Kali* model. Most noticeably, the classification of the selection of knowledge was weakened, such that the child's own experience and environment were central to school learning. This in turn required teachers to re-imagine their roles: they were no longer the sole authority over what counted as valid knowledge in schools. In the next section, I discuss how *LC* teachers in Kamala cluster interpreted these new expectations in relation to the social dynamics of their classrooms.

Unsurprisingly, many teachers in Kamala cluster spoke in similar ways to their Mallige cluster colleagues about their classroom interactions and relationships with students. *LC* teachers not only had similar experiences of initial teacher training and were working in similar social contexts as their *Nali Kali* colleagues but they had also been involved in the *Nali Kali* program before *LC* was introduced in the area. So, for instance, the tough love expressed by many *Nali Kali* teachers was often also described by *LC* teachers. In Anitha's account of her close relationship with students, she described her need, at times, to maintain explicit control over classroom interactions:

> With children…they will love me always…why? Because I make them to play, laugh, dance, they can sit wherever they want. And if I tell them 'sit here', then they will sit there…If any program [school activity] is going and if any noise is being made, and if I make just one beating, then all children will become silent, thinking, 'Oh, madam is very strict so we should be scared of her'. We should talk to them with love; when it is singing time, I'll get them to sing. And when it is a funny time, then they will laugh. If it is a dancing time, I'll get them to dance. But when they make noise and make me frustrated I will tell them off strictly. I love my children like this. (Anitha *LC* K1)

The closeness of the teacher–student relationship was seen by the *LC* teachers I interviewed as supporting the socialising role of the school. Saraswathi described how teachers needed to treat students like their own children. For Saraswathi, this meant that her pedagogic work centred on the provision of moral guidance to her students:

> We should treat children as *our* children. They are not other children, they are *our* children. All these are children…they have come like unmoulded clay. We can mould this unmoulded clay in any manner. If he is in high school, they will have their own type of thinking capacity. These children will not be having that kind of capacity. The way that we pull [guide] these children, is the way that they come. Telling them about what is good and bad…As we know, *gidavaagi bagguvudhu maravaagi baggalla* [you can bend a plant, but not a tree, as in: you can't teach an old dog new tricks]…We are giving knowledge to them, right? However much money you give, it won't be enough. However much of anything you give, it won't be enough. But, if we give *education* to them they'll study in their future… (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

The metaphor Saraswathi uses to understand her students, moulded/unmoulded clay, is one that underscores the socialising role of the school and the authority of the teacher. Interestingly, the *tabula rasa* model of the young child implied in these comments ('these children will not be having that kind of [thinking] capacity') was clearly at odds with the *LC* expectations that teachers recognise the knowledge students bring to learning processes. Indeed, Saraswathi's construction of the child was far from the creative and analytical learner characterised in *LC* ideals. Her account of the child as unmoulded clay legitimised teachers' strong control over the relay of knowledge – 'we are giving knowledge to them, right?'

However, not all *LC* teachers constructed the child and her needs in the same way or wanted to protect the teacher's moral authority to the same extent. Shivanna, a teacher in a small Kamala primary school, seemed more open to the changed authority relations between students and teachers brought about by child-centred programs. He took up the *LC* reform language to describe the importance of 'freedom' in schools and the new 'channel' between teachers and students. In Shivanna's explanation, these new classroom relations question the common conflation of 'fear' with 'respect':

> Now there is a channel between students and teachers. But in those days, we had respect, but we had fear of teachers. But that doesn't mean that today teachers are not getting respect. There is respect for teachers. But they [children] don't have fear. There is freedom. If there

> is a fearful environment, how will the children's future be shaped? If that fear stays in children, it will suppress them. Children need to be free. (Shivanna *LC* K9)

Shivanna recognised that pedagogic relationships in schools produce social messages, messages which extend beyond schools and into children's futures. He questions the suppressive implications of fearful school environments, acknowledging that schools can have liberatory influences on students' futures. However, unlike Saraswathi's emphasis of the teachers' moral authority in the previous account, Shivanna did not use these liberatory ideals to rearticulate teachers' control over learning.

The new *LC* model of the student – communicative, analytical, and curious – emerged more clearly when teachers detailed the nature of pedagogic interactions in their classrooms. For example, Lalitha described how students are now able to speak in class and how the teacher's role was to listen and facilitate as necessary. Classroom talk did not need to be directed by the teacher, and students were even starting to interact with each other and lead their own discussions. The active, communicative student characterised here is in stark contrast to earlier models of strongly framed rote pedagogies which positioned students as passive recipients of knowledge. In Lalitha's *LC* classroom, there was a space for individual voices, not just collective repetition directed by the teacher:

> In this [*LC* method], the children talk more. We just listen to what the children are saying and point out whatever is wrong in that. In this, what has happened is, last year it was like that: the children were talking and we used to listen. Now, recently, for the fourth standard children, even before we open our mouths they themselves interact with each other. If one says something, the other says whether it is right or wrong and they decide themselves by discussion. So the decision is taken by them. And at the end we say 'okay', but that's all. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

In Lalitha's descriptions, the weakened classification of school knowledge in the *LC* classroom (in which students' experiences were now relevant to the pedagogic relay) opened up possibilities for new kinds of interaction. There was a weaker framing over the pedagogic relay, students being expected to 'talk', 'interact', and 'decide'. Authority was shared, and the teacher took a step back: 'at the end we say 'okay', but that's all'.

Other teachers in Kamala primary schools also described the significant transformation of classroom interactions encouraged through the *LC* reform. Shivanna described how teachers and students were to 'exchange thoughts' as part of the *LC* pedagogic relationship. Shivanna again pointed to how this relationship required a new understanding of 'respect', informed by the equal exchange of knowledge, rather than by an unquestioning reverence of the teacher's moral authority:

> By communicating with children, we will exchange thoughts with children. In this the respect will be increased. What this means is, there will be many things where even *we* will learn from children. And even children will learn many things from us. Here, as well as our *children's* learning, *we'll* have the opportunity for learning ourselves in school. Maybe new new ideas, like…if a child asks anything…till then, we'll not be knowing about it. Though we'll be knowing…when the child asks something, we'll be motivated to know even more about that subject, and we will think 'oh the child has asked about this, so let me know more

> about it, its advantages and disadvantages, for children, so that the children will get to know more completely'. (Shivanna *LC* K9)

Shivanna's comments suggest that the *LC* program positions teachers as continuous learners – they are able to learn from children and be 'motivated to know even more'. The transferral of authority in progressive pedagogies blurs the boundaries between the expectations of teachers and learners: it makes teachers learners and learners teachers. In these new authority relations, the weakened control over the pedagogic interaction arguably places more onus on the student, producing new forms of regulation. How is this understood in the rural Indian context? As Mary Vasantha reflected, each student has to have greater responsibility over their learning in order to succeed in the new 'challenging world':

> This world itself is a challenging world. In that way, children in school are taking learning as a challenge. In those days, there was no challenge. Education was just something they used to learn. Nowadays, the child thinks: '*He* is learning, so even *I* want to learn, *he* is doing, so even *I* want to do'. This thinking is growing. (Mary Vasantha *LC* K5).

Mary Vasantha gestures towards the competitiveness of schooling in an increasingly competitive, challenging social context. This requires each child to have the individual desire to perform against her peers ('*He* is learning, so even *I* want to learn'). Schools, too, partake in exercises of performance measurement and comparison – as in the establishment of state-wide standardised testing regimes. The stakes of education in a 'challenging world' are increased and more explicit to students – competition and individualised success means that schooling is no longer just a matter of course ('just something they used to learn').

In this sense, Mary Vasantha explained how *LC* students in Kamala primary schools were participating in a wider competitive education environment. As she continued to reflect, she identified an emerging tension between the ideals of child-centred pedagogies and the performance requirements of competitive schooling:

> What these people [*LC* program officers] and what *Nali Kali* are telling is that we should discuss whatever the child knows. What the child is knowing. But here the child hasn't got much experience. This is a village environment. *Nothing* is there. They just watch some movies on TV, other than that, they don't watch anything related to education on TV. So what can they say? (Mary Vasantha *LC* K5)

In the *LC* classroom, the weakened classification of school knowledge meant that students were encouraged to draw on their own resources in learning processes. As documented in the analysis in Chapter 4, educational projects in Karnataka were entwined with modernising agendas focused especially on technological advancement and global competitiveness. Mary Vasantha questioned whether the resources in poor, rural contexts are sufficient for students to succeed in this competitive educational project. Her comments raised the question of how far the expectations of child-centred education assume a level playing field across what are in fact markedly different, and inequitable, social contexts. Given the weight of deficit discourses in teachers' accounts of rural communities, the tensions that Mary Vasantha expressed could well have been re-inscribing rural students' inadequacies and the challenge of teachers' pedagogic work – 'this is a village environment. *Nothing* is there'.

6.3.3 Summary

This chapter has examined the interrelations of three themes in the context of rural Karnataka primary schools: the construction of the rural child, the role of the school, and teachers' interpretations of new social relations in child-centred classrooms. Analysing teachers' accounts of their work in rural schools has shown how deficit models of the uneducated, uncivilised, and undisciplined rural child have shaped the explicit socialising/disciplining function of the school. Teachers' regulative discourses of the 'good' student constructed multiple and often competing pedagogic roles for the student. Recontextualising some of the ideals of the child-centred reforms, teachers described an emergent student-subject who was to some extent oriented towards autonomous, individualised, and socially flexible thinking. The *Nali Kali* discourse underscored ideas relating to the 'joyful' learner, and the *LC* discourse took interest in the 'communicative' learner.

The chapter also explored how teachers interpreted the nature of classroom interaction with respect to new authority relations between the student, teacher, and school knowledge. This investigation of pedagogic control revealed how emergent *Nali Kali* and *LC* discourses were sometimes recontextualised with relation to the socialising/disciplining function of the school. This saw a pulling back towards strongly framed pedagogic relationships in some teachers' comments. The pedagogic relationship as a social relationship was particularly apparent in this struggle for authority. The next chapter builds on this analysis by exploring how teachers interpreted the selection, sequence, pace, and evaluation of knowledge in the *Nali Kali* and *LC* models. That is, I examine what Bernstein called the 'instructional discourses' of the two pedagogies. In doing so, I am able to provide a more detailed picture of how teachers working through these social struggles in their classrooms were recontextualising their pedagogic practices.

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Chapter 7
Principles of Instruction

The previous chapter investigated how the pedagogic work of schools in rural Karnataka involved the socialisation of children into certain types of conduct, manner and character. Bernstein suggested that this kind of work is produced through the 'regulative' discourse of pedagogy: the discourses through which social norms and authority relations circulate and are established in schools. In rural Karnataka, child-centred agendas for democratic, participatory relations in classrooms and the construction of the individualised student-subject were recontextualised through strongly framed social authority relations. In addition to the new dynamic between the child and the teacher, the child's relationship to school knowledge was also reconfigured in Kamala and Mallige schools. In this chapter, I discuss this latter relationship by focusing on the organisation of knowledge in the *Nali Kali* and *LC* reform context – or on what Bernstein called the 'instructional discourse' of pedagogy.

Drawing on teachers' responses from interviews, I look at how the organisation of school knowledge – its selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation – was constituted in Mallige and Kamala schools. Bernstein suggested that these principles of instruction create specialised skills and brought these skills into a relationship with each other (Bernstein 2000:32). The productive work of instructional discourses implied by Bernstein signals that the relay of knowledge (pedagogy) is not such a technical, value-free process as it oftentimes is characterised. Rather, the organisation and relay of school knowledge is constituted through social relations which determine what counts as school knowledge, the structure of that knowledge, the relation between knowledge sets, and how that knowledge will be transmitted and to whom.

Using Bernstein's ideas on classification and framing (see Chapter 2), this chapter shows how Indian primary school teachers have worked with the ordering principles of school knowledge that were proposed by the *Nali Kali* and *LC* pedagogic reforms. Learning through 'activities' in *Nali Kali* and learning through 'discussion' in *LC* required teachers to embrace new theories of knowledge acquisition. Teachers had to make a conceptual shift – from knowledge being passively received by students (which was characteristic of traditional didactic instruction), to

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knowledge being actively constructed by students (which was a new expectation of the child-centred reforms). The analysis in this chapter reveals how these competing theoretical frameworks for learning were operating in Kamala and Mallige schools, leaving many teachers unconvinced that the child-centred models they were to implement would result in 'real' learning.

7.1 *Nali Kali* Principles of Instruction

7.1.1 The Selection of Knowledge

As described in Chapter 4, the content and sequence of *Nali Kali* learning cards was determined by the highly structured national syllabus which set out Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL). Each subject – Kannada, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies – had a separate set of cards with a series of tasks or 'activities' through which MLL 'competencies' were to be acquired. In this sense, the *Nali Kali* model maintained strong classification of subject competencies and grade-based learning outcomes. The externally determined syllabus structure provided a tight framework for the selection of school knowledge for both teachers and students. This framework created clear distinctions between children's experiences at home and the kind of knowledge that was valued in school.

> Small children will not be having that much knowledge…They will tell something. But they can't think in broader way. They will tell to their own limits. They will tell from their own imagination. They will tell their house incidents to us. They will express their feelings. When we come immediately to school, one after the other they will start telling: 'Some relatives had come to our home. We had prepared this dish today, we had been outside to see this'. They will tell everything to us…they will tell all these naturally. It is not necessary to develop this in learning. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

Here, Radhamani acknowledged children's ability to express themselves, be imaginative, and have opinions. However, she explained that these were 'natural' characteristics of young children, and were not explicitly related to the teacher's task of transmitting knowledge based on the school syllabus. In effect, children's experiences and knowledge from their home environments were not seen as 'necessary to develop' in terms of 'learning' the set syllabus. In Radhamani's account, young children were not expected to have extensive knowledge that would have relevance in schools. In this sense, the work of the primary school teacher was to relay knowledge that was largely insulated from the child's own experiences and knowledge. This implies a strong classification of school knowledge.

The strong classification of knowledge also gained traction through discourses of the 'uneducated' rural child (see Chapter 6). For example, Sujatha, who worked in Mallige HPS, explained why she frequently used 'copy-writing' tasks (in which students repetitively write a given letter or word) for her standard 1 children, rather than the *Nali Kali* activities in which she was trained.

> Why are we doing this [copy-writing]? Because, the child has come just now [to school]. Even at home he hasn't done anything like this [writing]. In cities, at the age of four years, that is in LKG and UKG [lower and upper kindergarten], they will get them to write. But here, he is five and a half years. The child doesn't even know how to hold the chalk piece. So we get him to *write write write* and practice…that's the reason why we do it…So, at least, in that method, let him learn. Let him come to that level. (Sujatha *NK* M1)

Sujatha saw her rural students as having different needs to urban children who attend private kindergartens before commencing primary school. Her comments suggest that poor rural children need to catch up to their urban middle-class counterparts who are better prepared for school practices and pedagogic expectations. An explicit instruction in which students repetitively '*write write write*' was seen by Sujatha to help rural students to 'come to that level'. Here, the relay of knowledge is to be firmly controlled by the teacher, despite the intentions of the *Nali Kali* reform to weaken the framing of pedagogic interactions. The strong classification of knowledge (as the insulation between what is selected as valued knowledge and what is not) in copy-writing tasks is supported through the regulative discourses of the rural 'uneducated' child.

Savitha held a similar view about the need for stronger instructional codes. She spoke about the purpose of 'copy-writing' as a daily homework practice for her students. The insulation of school knowledge from local knowledge is maintained through the social power of the 'educated'.

> When the child goes home, he doesn't do anything. His parents won't teach him, they might have gone for labouring, they might come at six o'clock, or eight o'clock. Until they come, these children will just roam around. So at least, if we give copy-writing, they will sit for at least half an hour or one hour and do some work…Parents will say, 'since we [parents] haven't learnt anything, we don't know how to teach'. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Such homework tasks place school knowledge into the home in the form of prescribed letters or words for repetitive reproduction. Children's own experiences or local knowledge would not be related to such tightly controlled tasks. Savitha's further comments described the received nature of school knowledge, revealing the strong controls over its transmission.

> If we don't tell anything to children, like, 'you learn this, you do this', then…so we will make them to trace letters repeatedly or give them writing practice and we'll make them write on the board. If a book is provided, we will make them write in a book…if we do these, children will get more practice, and they will be fast in their learning. (Savitha *NK* M1)

These quotes begin to show how these teachers have worked with the tightly framed MLL syllabus structure that organised the selection of knowledge in *Nali Kali* schools. While the reform attempted to weaken the framing rules over classroom interaction, the selection of knowledge in the *Nali Kali* model (the classification of knowledge) remained considerably strong. Thus, while some teachers described the 'joyful' pedagogy of *Nali Kali* as encouraging 'something of a home environment' (see Sect. 6.3.1), ideals of weakening the boundary between the home and the school did not necessarily suggest a weaker classification over what counted as valued school knowledge. So, in this model, the new (weakly framed) authority relations between the teacher and the student envisaged by the reform did not always lead to the child having greater control over the selection of knowledge.

7.1.2 *Nali Kali: The Sequence and Pace of Knowledge Relay*

The *Nali Kali* program set out a new sequence of language instruction for teachers to follow. Previously, all 49 phonemic letters of Kannada (an alphasyllabic language) were taught, and only then were students taught to construct words. This was seen to be a decontextualised approach to language education, as it focused on the students' ability to memorise letters rather than to understand how letters are used in words and the meaning of those words. An alternative approach to language acquisition was encouraged through the *Nali Kali* learning activities. In first standard, teachers were to rearrange the sequence of instruction by first focusing on five frequently used letters (in English orthography, these are '*ra*', '*ga*', '*sa*', '*da*', and '*a*') so that about 18 words could be formed from these five letters.

> In those days…children would do just '*a aa e ee*' as a *kurudupata* [translates to 'blind lesson' to suggest a rote-based transmission]. We just used to teach them from '*a*' to '*la*'… Previously we used to teach from '*a*' to '*la*', completely. Now what has happened is, for first standard we'll teach them only '*ra*' and daily we'll ask them to trace out the letter [to practise writing the letter form]. Like that, five letters will be taught, '*ragasa da a*'. So letters will be chosen from in between the alphabet. First we used to teach them '*a aa, e ee, u oo*' [the alphabet in sequence], now what has happened is we teach them '*ragasa da a'* and then '*java ma bhana*'… (Sabina *NK* M5)

According to the *Nali Kali* program, the new approach to language instruction was to 'instil in children a sense of confidence that they can make so many words with so few letters' (Kaul 2004:5). In doing so, the pedagogy maintained a strong framing over the sequence of knowledge relay. The fixed and minutely ordered syllabus (five letters at a time, in a set order) controlled the sequence of knowledge not only for the students, but for the teachers in schools as well. Sujatha described how 'they' (the government) divided up the syllabus 'part by part' for teachers and students alike.

> Step by step it has come and the child feels it is easy. The previous content was not like that…it was directly through the text book. So, for example, previously, a whole fruit was given to eat at a time. But now it's not like that. They have given part by part and telling us to eat… (Sujatha *NK* M1)

According to Sujatha, the tight organisation of knowledge was so that 'the child feels it is easy'; however, it did not necessarily give the child more control over her learning, or teachers more control over their instruction. Indeed, *Nali Kali* teachers were expected to complete monthly 'portions' of the syllabus according to guidelines set by the state. These portions were outlined in a guidebook given to each teacher, and they corresponded to the *Nali Kali* learning cards that teachers were expected to use. The pace of progress through the learning cards was often monitored by officers from the education bureaucracy who would visit schools.

Leelamba described how inspections by officers pressured her to complete the *Nali Kali* learning cards at a certain pace. In her large class of 52 students, this created significant difficulty.

> We have to teach to so *many* children. And we have to teach to all those children. *Nali Kali* means, *all* children should learn. Not just one or two. If they [officers] come and ask: 'Which card have you learnt?! Read that card!', if they ask like this, the child should be able

> to read it. To that level…we should teach…in *Nali Kali*. At that time, we feel it is a bit difficult, we feel, 'oh, they have given so much [syllabus content], for first standard. *So* much is there. How can we pour this into the children?' (Leelamba *NK* M2)

It is very demanding for teachers to implement an activity-based, 'joyful', child-centred pedagogy in a classroom of 52 children. However, teachers were simultaneously expected to deliver a strongly framed sequence and pace of knowledge transmission, and their delivery was monitored. Thus, despite *Nali Kali* ideals of encouraging children to learn at their 'own pace' (see Chapter 4), the good student was one who progressed through the syllabus content quickly. Leelamba described how she needed to 'pour' knowledge into children, suggesting strong controls over school knowledge despite the official intentions of the reform for greater 'freedom' over learning interactions. Her view of learning emerges from the highly structured organisation of the *Nali Kali* syllabus, large class sizes, and the inspectorial cultures of teachers' work.

7.1.3 *Nali Kali: Learning Happily Through Activities*

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy was organised around learning cards which involved small-group tasks or 'activities'. In practice, this was predominantly understood by teachers to 'attract' children to school, and provide ways for them to 'learn happily'. Jayakumara and Govindappa spoke about the use of activities and other *Nali Kali* teaching strategies such as singing, storytelling and games.

> Previously, it wasn't about using activities. Previously there was only the lesson. And we had to teach children [the lesson]. That's it. Nothing much like giving happiness to children…like playing, singing, storytelling, all those things were not much. But now, it is doing the lesson through games, for children. While playing the games, teaching is going on. For children, there are more activities. That is why children feel happy in learning. Before, children used to get scared to come to school. 'Oh, teacher will beat us if we don't learn this, they'll beat us.' They had this fear. Now it's not like this. Now it is like, 'oh, miss will teach this story, oh, I should go to school, tomorrow they'll teach another new story!' This type of happiness and attraction is here now. Children have got more attraction towards school compared to before. (Jayakumara *NK* M4)

> We'll get them to write…We'll give them some words, fill in the blanks, we'll give them all those, and we'll give some pictures and tell them to write about it…and there will be match-the-following with pictures and words. There will be an activity called 'word sound', all those will be played by them. Children will play happily. And they will write. Children are happy in *Nali Kali*…since activities are there, the children will learn happily. (Govindappa *NK* M6)

Nali Kali activities were most commonly seen to focus on the affective needs of students. Some teachers explained how *Nali Kali* activities were useful pedagogic strategies for presenting information in different ways to children. For example, Stella Gita described how her *Nali Kali* training helped her teach in a 'simple way'. This meant drawing on multiple methods to present information so that children remember and 'quickly' understand.

> I came to know how to teach children in a simple way…maybe through activities, or telling the lesson through stories or songs, and using charts and models. By showing all these

> things, learning will be fast and children will understand quickly and it will remain in their minds for a longer time. ‘Oh I had seen this thing, from this I had learnt this…’ It will be in their mind. (Stella Gita *NK* M4)

Nali Kali ‘activities’ were used as a strategy to help children remember knowledge content, and were not in this sense a means of collaborative or exploratory interaction. Teachers did not see learning activities as shifting the child’s relationship to knowledge toward actively ‘constructing’ knowledge rather than just ‘receiving’ or remembering it. *Nali Kali* activities often involved strongly framed tasks (like students reading a set of words aloud to their group) which had fixed outcomes. Such activities were not always conducive to dialogic interaction or enquiry in the classroom.

The group-work activities in the *Nali Kali* model functioned largely as strategies for teachers to manage large numbers of students. As Sudharani described, organising her students into groups to complete the *Nali Kali* activity cards provided an opportunity for peer monitoring and instruction. Small groupings also allowed for moments of teacher-led instruction for those children in her large class of 53 students ‘who have not learnt’.

> Whether a group is formed or not…a child who has got the ability to learn will learn in groups and also individually. By making groups, we can sit and teach to children who have not learnt. Others who have learnt, they keep learning themselves in groups. There will be a leader in a group, and if we tell them ‘make them read that card’, they’ll make the others to read. (Sudharani *NK* M3)

Sujatha also explained that the primary purpose of student grouping was to monitor and manage her first standard class of 44 students. Student grouping was not primarily to provide conditions for a weakened framing of pedagogic interaction, although Sujatha did explain the practical benefit of this arrangement.

> Arathi: What is the main purpose of having groups in the class?
> Sujatha: [*pause*] It is easy for us [teachers], we’ll be able to know which child is at which level. If I make all these children to sit together, we will not be able to know who is learning what. If I come to know that a child is at a certain level, it will be easy for me to teach the next level. ‘He is in that level’, and immediately I will be able to know what I need to teach. But if we make them to sit together, we won’t be able to know. So, the groups are done to teach them in an easy way like this. (Sujatha *NK* M1)

For teachers, the regulative ideals of the *Nali Kali* discourse of students being ‘active’ and ‘independent’ do not necessarily imply a departure from didactic forms of instruction. Rather, direct instruction is organised through student groups (‘we tell them “make them read that card”’). In this way, learning ‘independently’ comes to signify learning through didactic transmission but without the explicit involvement of the teacher. As Sudharani suggested, the use of ‘activities’ in this case may be irrelevant, since those with ‘ability’ will ‘learn in groups and also individually’. Thus, the recontextualisation of ‘activities’ in the *Nali Kali* child-centred pedagogy does not significantly redefine the child’s relationship to school knowledge. Strong classification and framing over the transmission of knowledge remain despite the reform’s rhetoric of greater learning freedoms.

This tension meant that there was some confusion about the role of activities in learning, leading some teachers to resist the *Nali Kali* recommended practice.

Sujatha suggested that using the *Nali Kali* activities puts teachers at 'risk'[1] of not being able to teach all levels of students. In other words, the activity-based pedagogy could not cater for all her students. She explained why 'model' *Nali Kali* lessons were not always useful in her large standard 1 class, particularly for 'dull' children.

> Sujatha: All lessons can't be like that [like 'model' *Nali Kali* lessons]. Because, for us, it will be too much risk.
>
> Arathi: Risk?
>
> Sujatha: Risk means…here the strength [class size] is more, around fifty members…and learning is not same for everybody. If I do all the model lessons it will be useful only for the brilliant children. For the dull students…for that level, the lesson cannot be done. That too, all lessons. Some have to be done, compulsorily, for all children. But if we do [teach] in *that* way, some children will not understand it. So that is why we can't use that… You haven't seen me letting my children do [activities, learning cards] on their own. You haven't seen it all these days. Since they are lagging behind in their learning, I have reduced all those types of activities and I have given more focus on learning.

In this explanation, Sujatha suggested a distinction between learning and activities, which brings into question the pedagogic function of the *Nali Kali* suggested activities. Similarly, Savitha, who teaches standard 2 at the same school, explained how *Nali Kali* activities might deviate from, or require more time to 'cover', the syllabus portions. After spending a month observing her predominant strategy of didactic whole-class instruction (see Chapter 8), I asked Savitha why she did not tend to use the *Nali Kali* learning cards and activities available to her. She responded:

> …last year there was no teacher for this class, so children didn't know *anything.* All the portions that had to be taught for children were *all* left behind…I have to cover even that [standard 1] portion, and I have to cover my portion also. I have to cover both the portions and fill it in children's minds and teach. So to do that, I need some time. So what I will do is, I cannot do lessons like this [*points to Nali Kali learning cards*] all the time. Because I have to observe *every* child, and I have to get the work done by *every* child. (Savitha *NK* M1)

The strongly framed grade-based syllabus structured Savitha's task of teaching such that she had to 'cover both the portions and fill it in children's minds'. Both Savitha and Sujatha suggested the merits of whole-class instruction as a matter of efficiency: 'I have to get the work done by *every* child'. *Nali Kali* activities were seen to detract from the main task at hand – the completion of the syllabus portions. With the strong classification of school knowledge, wherein knowledge is conceptualised as independent from the child and her environment, didactic modes of instruction are understood by teachers to be more efficient and effective. This was even the case for teachers who expressed support for child-centred ideals of weakly framed classroom interaction and notions of the active child 'learning happily'. Despite 'joyful' and 'activity-based' ideals, the tight organising principles of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy did not necessarily encourage teachers to imagine pedagogic interactions beyond didactic instructional modes.

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[1] The English word 'risk' was used by Sujatha. The 'risk' taken to do something is also used to convey a sense of the 'trouble' taken.

7.1.4 Nali Kali: Evaluating Learning

The *Nali Kali* program wanted to provide alternatives to the dominant modes of exam-based evaluation and explicit ranking of students in primary schools. Instead of tests or examinations, teachers were expected to conduct continuous observations of students' learning. However, the *Nali Kali* observational assessment process was not qualitative in nature. Teachers would assess whether or not students had acquired the relevant syllabus competency, for example, to write a particular letter, to read words starting with that letter, or to add two-digit numbers. Each student's progression through the tight sequential syllabus was 'checked off' by teachers on a chart that was displayed on the classroom wall. The open display of students' progress was used to account for teachers' work: visiting officers would inspect how many students had made sufficient progress through the syllabus portions. As a result, in order to comply with the officer's expectations, many teachers were observed checking off all students in the class, regardless of students' ability or performance.

This form of continuous evaluation in the *Nali Kali* model had two particularly significant implications for learners. First, the criteria for evaluating knowledge were not made explicit to students – the continuous mode of assessment meant that students were not told when they were being evaluated or what they were being evaluated for. This reflects what Bernstein called an 'invisible' pedagogy in which the controls over the pedagogic interaction are made invisible to students. Second, the assessment process emphasised the *pace* of knowledge acquisition – the 'level' students had reached in the learning card sequence – rather than *how* students learn. It is not surprising that this pace-based approach to assessment produced evaluative labels of 'slow' and 'fast' learners in the *Nali Kali* model.

> There will be continuous assessment. What children will be learning, we will be seeing it always. Every day we will be doing assessment. But children will not know that we are doing assessment. They will be learning themselves on their own. If children progress in learning, we will mention it on the progress chart for every 15 days. We will put a tick on the progress chart. Which child is in which level, which card the child is learning…all these we will tick. (Radhamani *NK* M3)

Many teachers expressed concern that the implicit approach of assessment in the *Nali Kali* pedagogy meant that students were not aware of evaluative expectations and processes – the 'question and answer system'. In particular, teachers described how this would fail to prepare students for examinations in later years of schooling and for the standardised testing that was periodically conducted by the state.

> If exams are conducted…our children have this [*Nali Kali* learning] card system. They are not aware of the question and answer system. We teach them the card system. So, we don't teach them how to write answers to the questions. We don't have that system. So that method will not be known to children. By doing this [examination procedure], children will take responsibility; teachers also will take more responsibility. From this, children's involvement will be more and teachers will also try to teach more. (Savitha *NK* M1)

> Now, for third standard suddenly we'll be having books. In first and second standard there are no books [in the *Nali Kali* method]. When they go to third standard, and if in the exam

> they ask 'answer these questions', they'll not be knowing about this, and they will not know how to write. So, we have to start from the beginning *now*, right? Now itself [in standards 1 and 2], if they come to know about exams, it will be useful for them in the future. We have to start teaching for third standard how to write an [examination] answer. How to write an answer. So, like this, we should start now [in standards 1 and 2]. (Sudharani *NK* M3)

Only a few teachers expressed the merits of continuous forms of assessment. Sabina explained that continuous assessment provided a relief from yearly examinations which were a burden on young children.

> Continuous assessment is good. Children learn every day, and we can correct them there itself. Otherwise if we teach the child for the *whole* year and then give the exam at once all together it will be too much of a problem. For instance, if something has been learnt in June or July and the exam is given in the following April, what the child has learnt previously may be forgotten. If we give [an exam] all at once, the child feels it is very heavy…that's why continuous assessment is good. (Sabina *NK* M5)

However, all the *Nali Kali* teachers in this study, including Sabina, explained how they continued to conduct explicit forms of assessment. This mostly took the form of oral and written testing and daily 'copy-writing' homework tasks. Teachers had in mind the importance of examinations for students' progression through the school and post-school evaluation systems. As Sudharani explained above, 'if they come to know about exams, it will be useful for them in the future'. All teachers interviewed expressed the tensions created for teachers by the introduction of implicit evaluative processes in a competitive, performance-based system.

7.1.5 Summary of Nali Kali Instructional Principles

The organising principles of the *Nali Kali* instructional discourse, particularly the strong classification of school knowledge, produced concepts of learning in schools that were based on syllabus output. Teachers' comments showed how knowledge was received by (or 'poured' into) students through strongly framed instruction. The understanding of the child's passive relationship to knowledge operated alongside reform ideals of weakening the framing over classroom interaction through 'activities', 'joy', and even 'love' (see Chapter 6). The strong classification of school knowledge legitimised strongly framed principles of instruction, usually involving repetitive 'copy-writing', which stretched across the ideals of 'joyful' and 'activity-based' learning. The pedagogic function of 'activities' was therefore ambivalent: teachers did not tend to interpret the *Nali Kali* pedagogy as promoting modes of interaction beyond didactic forms of instruction. Their pulling back towards visible evaluation modes (tests and homework) was indicative of the tension created by the overarching performance-based educational system. Teachers' evaluative labels of children were explicitly related to the *pace* of knowledge acquisition, despite the reform's desires for implicit modes of assessment and for children to learn at their 'own pace'.

7.2 *LC* Principles of Instruction

7.2.1 The Selection of Knowledge

The *LC* program had different organising principles than the *Nali Kali* model examined above. Rather than using learning cards, *LC* teachers were to integrate the state determined syllabus into ‘learning concepts’. Each concept was to be explored with students through ‘brainstorming and active-learning’, ‘collaborative projects, whole group reflection, and documentation’ (LC 2006:33). As part of this ‘concept facilitation approach’, teachers were expected to organise whole-group and small-group discussions in their classrooms. The approach was designed to encourage ‘a locally appropriate context’ for learning, in which students would ‘establish connectedness between self and context/learning tasks’ (ibid.). It presented a new way of understanding what counted as valued knowledge in school. Sundari and Saira explained how the *LC* model significantly transformed the relationship between the child and school knowledge, and how experiential knowledge, directed by the student, was emphasised.

> No textbooks, no bags, no lesson books, without *all* this, they should learn in different ways. It might be like this. See, like, there was a fair in Kamala village. In the concept of ‘fair’, all the children will be knowing the local things. So they will tell about it. They [*LC* project officers] tell us: ‘based on that [concept of ‘fair’] you should do [lessons]. Get local content’. And if *we* want to teach children a bit deeper, *we* have to do something. According to them, children shouldn’t have [text]books, meaning they shouldn’t have pressure. Taking one concept, and developing it, there is no need for books and learning will be open. They have left it to us only. ‘You can teach and you can give more information to children.’ There is no framework… (Sundari *LC* K6)

> Teachers are not just the ones to command. They are not teachers, they are only facilitators. What they say is: ‘From children let it come. The children should say more. You just touch upon it, and help them’. That is their purpose. ‘Everything you should not say, and they should not be only listeners. They should say, and you should listen. Where they get problems, you have to help them.’ For children, there is no burden like ‘you should learn right now, you should learn only this much, that much’. They are free, anytime they can learn. But, *keep* helping them to learn. But don’t put restrictions on them, that they must learn this much. There are no rules and it’s not compulsory, no conditions. But they will learn, you teach them in a relaxed way. If you teach everything, what do the children learn? Children with experience, *from experience*, should learn. (Saira *LC* K2)

Sundari described how the *LC* program attempted to validate ‘local content’ and emphasise the teacher’s role of ‘deeply’ developing these concepts in the classroom. Teachers were not given a fixed pedagogic ‘framework’ to follow. This suggests a weaker classification and framing over the selection of knowledge, both for students (‘learning will be open’) and for teachers (‘they have left it for us only’). In a similar way, Saira described how, according to *LC*, knowledge should come from children’s own experiences. The task for the teacher was to be a ‘facilitator’. This required teachers to listen to students, to not place any restrictions on them, and to ‘*keep* helping them to learn’. Saira interpreted these expectations as teaching in a ‘relaxed’ way. She also described how such weak classification of knowledge in the *LC* pedagogy leads to weak controls over the pedagogic interaction: 'They are free, anytime they can learn'.

Thus, in contrast to the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, *LC* teachers were required to engage with theories of learning oriented more closely to constructivist principles and dialogic inquiry. While *Nali Kali* teachers described how knowledge was fixed and was to be received by learners, these *LC* teachers interpreted their task as needing to teach with 'no rules' and 'no framework'. Instead, the child's knowledge and experience was used as the base for learning. In the sections that follow, I examine how these weakened rules for the selection of knowledge were worked through by *LC* teachers in Kamala schools.

7.2.2 LC: The Sequence and Pace of Knowledge Relay

The *LC* program introduced mixed-grade classes for students in standards 1–5 in Kamala schools (except for Kamala HPS, which was a much larger school that had multiple classes for each grade). Multi-age, multi-grade classes meant that teachers had to devise pedagogic strategies to cater for diverse students. In the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, multi-grade teaching was tackled by having different sets of learning cards for standard 1 and for standard 2. The intention (which was not always actualised) was for students to progress through the learning cards according to their individual 'levels'. In the *LC* model, teachers did not have this kind of prescribed structure. Instead, they were to control the sequence and pace of knowledge transmission 'based on children's learning'.

> Here, based on children's learning…when we are teaching…here, there are children from first [standard] to fourth [standard]. But if we keep in mind a fourth standard child and do the lesson, the first standard child will not understand. If we keep in mind to teach a lesson for first standard, for bigger children they feel it is less [interesting]. So what we do is, when we are doing the lesson, we'll do the lesson with all four standards in mind. For example, for first standard and second standard children, we'll get them to write letters. And for second standard children, we'll make the child to write the words based on the letters. And for the third standard, taking those words, we will make them to create more similar words. There may be two or three words…or words that are synonymous. And coming to fourth standard, we will make them to frame sentences using these words on their own. Like this, based on their age, we'll make them to write. (Sumithra *LC* K7)

Here we see how an *LC* teacher continued to maintain control over the sequence and pace of instruction through differentiated learning tasks. These tasks were left open to teachers rather than provided by a set textbook or learning cards. In this way, the *LC* pedagogy gave teachers greater control over their curricula. However, this increased 'freedom' for teachers was not always seen as beneficial to students.

> Just because we have the freedom to choose it doesn't mean…Actually, there should be some control for what we should do, what we should teach. That should be known first for us. Previously there were textbooks, if there was some topic to teach we would be prepared for it. And they used to tell us to teach like that. But here it is not like that. Instead: 'What the child is learning, let it come from him, let it develop from him, don't put pressure on the

> child'. What this method says is 'don't give pressure to the child', that's it. But previously, the child *must* learn, like times-tables until ten. 'He *must* learn', it was like that. In this [new method], children who have come to second standard, they haven't learnt. But still they are telling not to put pressure on them. (Ramesha *LC* K8)

Ramesha's criticism of the *LC* reforms was that the weakened framing over teachers' work was a troublesome indication that the *LC* NGO (or perhaps even the state) had reduced their academic expectations of students ('they are telling not to put pressure on them'). He suggested that if teachers don't 'pressure' children (implying a weaker control over the pace of learning), then students are not able to adequately advance through the required syllabus.

While the weakened framing over the sequence and pace of knowledge relay might have meant that *LC* teachers had greater 'freedom' over their work, most teachers recognised the significant pedagogic and professional demands connoted by this so-called freedom. For example, *LC* teachers described how they needed to plan and research new concepts with the resources readily available to them (namely newspapers and magazines). This was particularly difficult given the lack of reference books or other resources in schools or in cluster resource centres. Furthermore, 'facilitating' a discussion-based approach was seen to be challenging, especially in large classes.

> The strength [number of students] is more in my class, and with so many students we can't manage using *LC*. If *Nali Kali* was there, we would have done it. Like, making it group-wise, and having the leaders manage. But here, the leaders can't manage. If you want to discuss the whole book, the teacher must and should be there. How long can children discuss between themselves the whole book? And between themselves, though they know some concepts, how many [other] concepts will they know as a child? (Mary Vasantha *LC* K5)

The weakened framing sought by the *LC* program was challenged by teachers in Kamala schools – many asserted the need for tighter controls over the sequencing and pacing rules of pedagogic interactions, despite the program's somewhat contradictory ideals. Mary Vasantha was adamant about the need for teacher-controlled management of learning within the child-centred pedagogy; the young age of children limited the possibility for weakened framing in the *LC* model. As Ramesha pointed out, 'some children cannot discuss, like those in first standard, who have come straight from home'. How, then, was the discussion-based pedagogy re-contextualised by teachers in their *LC* classrooms?

7.2.3 LC: Learning Through Discussion

The focus of the *LC* program on student-led discussions positioned *LC* as a challenge to the previous *Nali Kali* model which, as we have seen, emphasised learning based on the fixed syllabus. Some *LC* teachers expressed doubts about the pedagogic function of classroom 'discussions', especially the open-endedness of discussion-oriented tasks.

> Before this *LC*, we had the *Nali Kali* program. In *Nali Kali…Nali Kali* was good. Why? Because there were some activities in it. There were some trainings for dance, singing, for children. Learning also was good, better than this. What has happened in *LC* is, here the child…it is just *discussions*. The child will discuss. In this process, the child will learn the speaking skill well. That will develop. That's all. (Ramesha *LC* K8)

Ramesha interpreted the *LC* program as reducing classroom pedagogy solely to 'discussion'. By comparison, he saw the *Nali Kali* program as encouraging diverse pedagogic strategies like activities, dancing, and singing. In his view, the *LC* pedagogy only developed children's 'speaking skills' even though the emphasis on dialogic learning aimed to encourage children to 'reflect', 'connect', and have a 'collaborative' involvement in the construction of knowledge. Similarly, Saira expressed her concern that the *LC* discussions did not focus on students' writing skills, while also acknowledging that *LC* discussions encouraged children to be 'open' and to participate in classes 'independently' and without 'stage fear'.

> Orally, all children are attentive. But in writing – some are writing, some are not writing. But *orally*, all children are open, they *say* [talk]. They get over stage-fear. The children won't have stage-fear. They participate in the classes *fully* independently. (Saira *LC* K2)

Lalitha also said that children in her *LC* classroom were encouraged to speak independently, which developed their confidence and ability to overcome 'stage fear'. Unlike many Kamala cluster teachers, Lalitha was openly supportive of *LC*'s discussion approach, and perceived it to be academically and socially effective.

> So far, from what we have seen, we are liking the *LC* method because we see some progress in the children, they speak independently, they write, they do everything and they mingle with each other. They have courage to stand up and talk. Actually, we ourselves, even now we have stage-fear! How to stand and talk…those children don't have that fear at all. (Lalitha *LC* K4).

Lalitha's comments reflect the intentions of the *LC* program in that she emphasised the importance of the independent, active, and confident learner. In contrast to these views, some teachers like Mahendra critiqued the *LC* pedagogy as producing 'dependent' students. He explained that if children do not learn (to write) letters 'formally', they will remain 'dependent' on others.

> In *LC* we ask questions to the children, we encourage them, and from that, we draw what he is thinking, and we can search what it is in his mind. Whatever is filled in his mind, we can get to know, and we can cooperate with him. This is the merit [of *LC*]. But a demerit [disadvantage] is also there: the child is not learning to read and write. He is not able to clearly write the letters. Formally, he is not learning the letters. It doesn't stay in his mind. With that [*LC*], he [the child] is always dependent on others, and will always remain dependent, that's what I feel. He can't do anything on his own. The child does express himself, but if you ask him to write, he doesn't write. He doesn't know anything in writing. He may say some sums, but he can't *do* the sums. My point of view is that the children should learn the basics. The foundation should be good. (Mahendra *LC* K3)

Mahendra acknowledged that classroom discussions enable teachers to get to know what is 'filled' in children's minds, but such approaches do not advance students' literacy and numeracy skills. The *LC* model foregrounded student expression, and teachers felt that this puts less emphasis on doing sums or writing. Mahendra suggested that a stronger framework for the relay of knowledge was required to ensure children had the ‘basics’ they needed to be independent in the written world. In his view, the distinction between ‘saying’ and ‘doing’ casts doubt over the pedagogic value of *LC* ‘discussions’.

The *LC* discussion-based approach was recontextualised by Kamala teachers largely as a pedagogy which enabled different types of classroom talk. In doing so, the teachers used *LC* pedagogy to encourage student expression and provide opportunities for students to build their confidence. Aside from this kind of social function, teachers were less certain about the significance of the *LC* approach in terms of academic learning (which was largely understood as the acquisition of the syllabus). The relationship between dialogic inquiry and the co-construction of knowledge was, for the most part, unacknowledged. The *LC* program required teachers to understand that knowledge is not fixed, but is contextual and co-constructed. Without this key theoretical link, teachers remained unconvinced that classroom ‘discussion’ would lead to ‘learning’. This resistance is perhaps unsurprising given the dominance of rote-based pedagogies in the Indian context, which defines knowledge as fixed and learning as received, but it conceivably accounts for much of the reluctance teachers expressed towards the new *LC* approach.

7.2.4 LC: Evaluating Learning

If learning was to occur in a pedagogically open framework, how was it to be evaluated? Teachers’ perspectives upon evaluation in the *LC* model provide very interesting insights into the ways the ‘invisible’ pedagogic ideals of the *LC* model came up against the tight performance systems of Indian school education. The *LC* program wanted teachers to recognise and evaluate students’ learning beyond their written outputs.

> In the previous system, we used to decide just by their writing skills: ‘This child is like this, like that’. In *LC*, we are looking at all methods: ‘This child is drawing or not, singing, writing, oral, speaking ability’. All we see. In other methods it’s not like that, it is just exams, do a test, and evaluate them, and tell the children a result. Like that only. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

Lalitha believed the evaluative criteria of school knowledge to be ‘weakened’ in the *LC* model. Teachers were now required to use a broader framework for assessing their students’ progress. Ramesha described the ‘framework’ of *Nali Kali* which, with its strong classification and framing of knowledge, produced a clearly defined system: ‘After this, you should learn this, this, this’. By contrast, the *LC* process of evaluation was much more ambiguous.

> *Nali Kali* is better than *LC*. There, what happens there is, for learning particularly, there will be some framework. After this, you should learn this, this, this. Even while assessing, we will come to know what the child has done and how he has done. But here, what has happened is, any situations, maybe some local fair or festival…for example, a fair: if we ask the child to discuss about the fair, he will write only what he has seen there, that’s all. So sometimes we don’t have clarification on what the child has learnt. (Ramesha *LC* K8)

The *LC* pedagogy required teachers to recognise that children can draw on their local knowledge in classroom learning processes. The contextual nature of knowledge meant that teachers could not assess children against externally fixed outcomes. However, Ramesha seemed unconvinced that children are able to bring sufficient knowledge to the classroom for teachers to be able to adequately evaluate their learning ('he will write only what he has seen there, that's all'). On the whole, the teachers I interviewed were not conceptualising knowledge as contextual and co-constructed.

In an attempt to broaden teachers' concepts of learning, the *LC* program introduced 'observation books' for the teachers, in which they should record students' progress with respect to a range of learning areas including psychomotor skills, communication skills, and writing skills. Teachers were expected to describe with qualitative detail students' progress, which description required close observation of students' interactions. Like the *Nali Kali* model, the criteria and process of assessment were explicit to the teacher, but remained implicit to students. The observation books were seen by most teachers as a significant pressure. Comments like Saraswathi's were typical:

> We have to write observations for every child. When they said this, we felt it was difficult. When the child doesn't write, how can we write observations? So like this so many things were piling up. *LC* first told 'only this much is enough', then later they kept on asking for more and more. So this made us oppose [*LC*]…observing children is very difficult. It is not that easy. At that time, we told them, 'this is difficult, really it is difficult'. (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

The new approach to evaluation required a greater involvement from teachers, since it diversified what counts as a valued 'output' of the schooling process. Evaluative discourses were broadened beyond common 'fast/slow' or 'bright/dull' distinctions. Indeed, the *LC* program wanted teachers to identify learners as 'dependent', 'interested', 'engaged', and 'independent' – labels which attempted to capture how students construct knowledge. And the language of 'independent' and 'dependent' did emerge in teachers' comments such as those printed above; however, the dominant evaluative labels that *LC* teachers used continued to be 'slow' and 'fast' – perhaps a throwback to their *Nali Kali* experiences.

The teachers I interacted with in Kamala schools described a significant tension between the loose 'framework' of the *LC* pedagogy (the weak classification of knowledge) and the tightly framed exam-based approach in the wider education system. Some teachers, like Shivanna and Lalitha, expressed concern about whether the *LC* pedagogy could properly prepare children for future progression through the education system.

> If we want to give higher education for children in the future…children have to get merit in everything [score good marks]. In that situation…with this *LC* method, we'll get children to discuss, get children to play, all these things will happen…but in today's situation, children's futures depend only on percentage [exam marks]. In this situation, with this *LC* method, leaving children [to learn at their own pace and in their own way], getting information from children, if we go on teaching them based on this method, it might stay with children always, but it will not be a good start for their future. (Shivanna *LC* K9)

> As one person we can't change the whole society. The society itself is like this, we can't do anything about it. If you see in the cities, if we want to send our children to higher classes, we have to send them to whatever convent school is there, even if we don't like it. Because if we teach our children in the method that we like, when they go to the next class, they

> won't be admitted. People will ask: 'Which convent school did you study in? How many marks did you get? What percentage? Where is the marks card?' And we wouldn't be able to give an answer for that. So even if we don't like it, we have to teach them in that exam method. (Lalitha *LC* K4)

These teachers are raising an important and unresolved issue. They have recognised that the *LC* pedagogy has attempted to challenge the dominant forms of teaching and evaluation in Indian schools, but they are cautious about what the implications of this upheaval will be for their rural learners. Child-centred pedagogy in the early years of schooling might have its place, but teachers are concerned about how students will transition into the more strongly framed learning contexts in later years. With this question in mind, *LC* teachers may judge that pulling back towards explicit assessment is in the best interests of their students (as did the *Nali Kali* teachers in Mallige cluster, with class tests and homework). However, despite their increased pedagogic 'freedom', *LC* teachers' work continues to be tightly regulated. The close involvement and frequent visits of *LC* NGO officers in Kamala schools meant that *LC* teachers did not conduct formal tests or examinations like many of their *Nali Kali* colleagues.

7.2.5 Summary of LC Instructional Principles

In exploring the ways in which teachers were working through the instructional principles of the *LC* pedagogy, this chapter has tried to shed light on some of the tensions that arise when a competence model of pedagogy is introduced into a highly-regulated performance-based system. At the centre of this difficult shift is a new way of understanding knowledge: as less bounded, less hierarchic, and less fixed. The new conceptualisation of knowledge by the *LC* model led to significant concerns for teachers who were trained and practiced in methods of didactic instruction. *LC* teachers raised doubts about the pedagogic value of discussion-based pedagogies which were seen to emphasise speaking skills over written work. This collective doubt signified teachers' interpretations that *LC* had weaker academic expectations of students, rather than signifying teachers' recognition of an opportunity to co-construct knowledge. Some teachers were concerned that this apparent weakening of rigour would fail to prepare students for future systems of education which were based on fixed, strongly bounded notions of knowledge.

The analysis also highlighted some differences between teachers' interpretations of *Nali Kali* and *LC* instructional discourses. Both programs aimed to weaken teachers' control over classroom interactions, but the ways in which knowledge was selected and valued in each model were noticeably different. Teachers described how the *Nali Kali* program maintained a tight classification over knowledge by closely following the national syllabus structure. While the *LC* model sought to legitimise students' active construction of knowledge, many teachers did not expressly describe this as an effective pedagogic approach. Both models challenged Kamala and Mallige teachers to consider knowledge relay as a weakly framed process, where greater control is handed over to the child. They required teachers to recognise that the child was not an empty vessel into which knowledge was to be 'poured'. This was a shift that some teachers openly questioned, suggesting that students were too young, or that their rural experiences were too irrelevant, for 'learning' to take place through such weakly framed methods. In this sense, teachers continued to understand 'learning' as the acquisition and repetition of syllabus content, rather than as the co-construction of knowledge.

This is not to say that the *Nali Kali* or *LC* pedagogies had necessarily failed. Rather, their child-centred pedagogic ideals were recontextualised by teachers who were working with different and at times conflicting professional knowledge. Alongside professional conditioning and concerns, the material conditions of teachers' work (large class sizes, multi-grade teaching, and a serious lack of resources in schools) meant that child-centred ideals were reshaped into a more 'practical' approach for rural teaching contexts. For example, group work in *Nali Kali* came to signify student-led didactic instruction rather than collaborative inquiry, and discussions in *LC* came to be understood as the practice of skilled speaking rather than dialogic exchange. Through this process of recontextualisation, the principles of instruction – particularly the weakened classification of knowledge in the *LC* model and the weakened framing over pedagogic interaction in *Nali Kali* – were questioned, resisted, and negotiated by teachers. In the next two chapters, I show how these principles of instruction are translated in and through teachers' pedagogic practices. I present two ethnographic case studies of teaching child-centred pedagogies in Mallige and Kamala primary schools.

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Chapter 8
Nali Kali at Mallige Primary School

In this chapter, I draw on ethnographic research conducted at Mallige Higher Primary School (HPS) to discuss how the recontextualisation of *Nali Kali* child-centred ideals took place in a specific classroom context. I focus on Savitha's standard 2 class in which 42 children were enrolled. Savitha was working with the post-2002 model of *Nali Kali* (see Chapter 4) which involved teaching through 'activities' as set out by *Nali Kali* learning cards. Savitha was an experienced teacher, having worked in the government school system for 15 years, 10 of those years in Mallige HPS. She generously agreed to let me observe her classroom each day for 1 month and conduct interviews about her experiences and practices of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy. This chapter analyses how Savitha reworked the *Nali Kali* model in her school and classroom context.

The chapter begins by focusing on the physical environment, the social context and the educational cultures of Mallige HPS to explore how social ordering took place at the school. The discussion provides a picture of the under-resourced, low-income, and socially stratified setting of the school and reveals the performance culture in which the *Nali Kali* pedagogy was to be implemented by Savitha. The analysis of the school context then moves to a close examination of Savitha's pedagogic practice. I explore the regulation of her standard 2 students by looking at the rituals and stratification of pupils in the classroom. I then analyse episodes of classroom practice to identify where and how weaker framing over knowledge transmission takes place in one of Savitha's lessons. This allows me to reflect on the implications of her pedagogic practice for *Nali Kali* reform ideals and for the social and pedagogic messages relayed to her standard 2 students.

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8.1 School Environment, Community Contexts, and Educational Cultures

This discussion draws on Bernstein's concept of the 'boundary' – the rules of classification through which knowledge, students, teachers, and communities come to be organised in the school context. The notion of the boundary is useful in exploring the ways in which social ordering takes place in Mallige HPS. It does not reduce the complexity of school life to a set of fixed or fenced-off categories. As Bernstein (2000:xiii) clarified, 'the boundary is not etched as in copperplate nor ephemeral as in quicksand, and is sometimes more enabling than disabling'. Nor are boundaries, as the effects of power, always explicit. Rather, 'distributions of power are realised in various, and often silent, punctuations of social space which construct boundaries' (ibid.). By drawing on the concept of the boundary, I examine the ordering of curricula and pedagogic structures in this school to highlight how they are *social* effects, rather than inherent to the school experience. As Bernstein emphasised, 'there is nothing intrinsic about how educational time is used, or the status of the various contents or the relation between the contents' (1975:80).

8.1.1 Mallige HPS: The Physical Environment

Mallige HPS is a large government school situated on the edge of Mallige village, about a kilometre from the village centre. The school is located next to a sealed road and is well connected by public buses to two town centres, 13 and 6 km away. Mallige is about 60 km from Mysore, the large town and district centre. I was informed by the Mallige HPS head teacher that the school was built in the 1960s on land donated by a local dominant-caste Marati family, who were still in the area. Before the construction of the school, classes were held in a field and then across the road in a large shed. Mallige HPS serves as a 'cluster centre' school; meetings with head teachers from other schools in the cluster and cluster-wide functions occur here, and the office of the Cluster Resource Person is located on the school premises. This makes the school a busy place, with frequent visitors.

There is a concrete wall with a lockable gate surrounding the school compound. Teachers commonly spoke about the compound wall as a demarcation between the school and the village. Many explained that a key characteristic of a 'good' school was the presence of a compound wall. Leelamba, for example, described how a compound wall indicated to the community that '*this* is a school', providing a symbolic boundary by which to distinguish the school from other places in the village. Of course, as I will illustrate, the strong classificatory distinction between the home and school was defined in more ways than as the physical boundaries of the school walls.

At the time of my research, in terms of physical infrastructure, Mallige HPS was reasonably well resourced compared to other schools in the area. The school had access to a bore-well for water, with a pump situated at the entrance to the compound. There was electricity supply to the school for 6 h a day though this was often irregular. The school had ten classrooms and a large playing field, as well as the head teacher's office. There was an unused 'computer room' with no computers, an office room with some tables and chairs, a kitchen for the preparation of student lunches, a food storage room, and also the Cluster Resource Centre room with some basic furniture. The buildings were concrete pukka (permanent) constructions, but the older buildings leaked water during heavy rains. I observed how a large class of 54 children in standard 4 had to squeeze to one side of their classroom to avoid sitting in the large puddles that had collected on the concrete floor. The physical layout of the school created strong boundaries between each class group. Each standard was located in a separate room, and the classrooms for the youngest students – standards 1 and 2, where *Nali Kali* was to be taught – were located in a separate block set back from the main school building.

The standard 1 and standard 2 classrooms had dimensions of about 5 m by 8 m. There were blackboards in each room and picture charts hung on the walls. Students at Mallige HPS would sit on the concrete floor during lessons, except in the two standard 7 classes which had wooden desks and benches. Teachers had a small desk and a chair in each room. The educational resources at the school were not always used by teachers or made available to students. For example, the school had two large locked cupboards filled with over 300 books in the 'office room'. These ranged from picture books for the younger standards, and novels and reference material for the higher grades. However, they were unavailable for students' use. Sujatha, the standard 1 teacher, explained that teachers did not want to take the 'risk' of using them in case they were damaged. Many teachers also had a lockable chest for their teaching materials, or they used the lockable cupboards in the 'office room'. The school had some sport equipment like a discus, shot-put, football, and rope for high jump. There were also some band equipment such as a drum and a trumpet which were used by selected students during special functions like the Independence Day parade.

There were established rules about the use of space and resources at Mallige HPS. Teachers had much greater privileges than students in terms of access to the school's resources. The school had four female and three male toilet cubicles (some of which were in disrepair) but these were only to be used by teachers. The small number of toilets and inadequate supply of water was the reason for children not being able to use these facilities. Instead, children went to the toilet in adjacent fields, and standard 1 children who were too young to cross the busy road went to the toilet to one side of the school ground.

The large field in the school was where, each day, the children would eat their lunch, which was provided by the government and cooked on the school premises. There was not much shade or shelter in the field area, so children often had to eat their lunch in the rain or hot sun. During the dry months, the children would eat in very dusty conditions though the field became green during the rainy season. There were some verandah-covered areas surrounding the classrooms, but these covered areas were used by teachers to keep their motorbikes out of the weather. Teachers ate their lunch (either brought from home or prepared by the cooks in school) in their classrooms or in the 'office room', not with students. The separate use of space at the school created physical boundaries, and hierarchies, between teachers and students.

8.1.2 Students at Mallige HPS

The organisation of students at Mallige HPS provides further insight into the social ordering that occurs in schools. The discussions show how Mallige teachers were expected to work with a child-centred pedagogy in classes of over 40 students, with limited or under-utilised resources, and in conditions of economic, social, and educational inequity. Mallige HPS was a large school in terms of student numbers, with a total enrolment of 422 in 2007 when this study was conducted. The head teacher explained that class sizes had reduced over the last decade since the construction of primary schools in surrounding villages. The lower primary schools (standards 1–5) in the 15 or so neighbouring villages were feeder schools for Mallige HPS. The school thus had two sections (class groups) for standards 6 and 7 to accommodate the greater numbers of students who would enrol after standard 5.

Mallige HPS was the main provider of primary education in Mallige village. According to a government survey conducted by teachers, there were 255 children of the standards 1–5 age group living in Mallige village in 2007. Although I was not able to obtain official statistics, anecdotally 20–30 of these children attended fee-paying private primary schools. There were no private schools within Mallige village, which meant that these students were likely sent either to the fee-paying Hindu religious school in the next village about 2 km away or to one of the two private schools in the nearest town 6 km from Mallige village. Perhaps the travelling distance and fee charges of private education prevented these institutions from posing significant competition for the fee-free government education at Mallige HPS. Private Kannada-medium education in the nearby town costs approximately Rs 1,000 for an initial 'donation' fee, plus Rs 50 for monthly fees, plus books, uniforms, and travel costs. English-medium education would have been more costly.

Table 8.1 presents the distribution of students by gender and caste category for each standard at Mallige HPS. This information was obtained from the chalkboard in the head teacher's office. Such an open display of enrolment figures by gender, caste, and grade shows how the classification of students was overt. The table also shows that each class had an enrolment of over 40 students; the *Nali Kali* child-centred pedagogy in standards 1 and 2 was expected to be implemented in relatively large classes.

We see here that the majority of students at Mallige HPS belonged to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) caste category, and that there was a relatively even distribution of male and female students. Mallige village had a large Nayaka community who constituted the ST population of students at the school. According to a 2007 survey conducted as part of the *Survana Grama Udaya* (Village Improvement

Table 8.1 Student enrolment by gender and caste category in the academic year 2007–2008, Mallige HPS

	SC			ST			Other			Total		
Class	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	4	7	13	12	14	26	3	4	7	18	26	44
2	5	1	6	15	12	27	6	4	10	26	16	42
3	4	1	5	25	14	39	5	5	10	34	20	54
4	2	1	3	18	24	42	4	5	9	24	30	54
5	1	2	3	15	13	28	5	5	10	21	20	41
6	4	3	7	19	21	40	23	19	42	46	43	89
7	4	2	6	20	28	48	22	21	43	46	51	97
Total	22	19	41	123	124	247	70	64	134	215	207	422

Notes: *M* denotes male students, *F* denotes female students, *T* denotes total number of students. Caste categories are those that are used by the school: *SC* for Scheduled Caste, *ST* for Scheduled Tribe, and *Other* for all other caste groups. See Appendix for notes on caste in India

Planning Committee), the total population of Mallige village was 3,250 people in 796 households. The community was primarily made up of upper-caste Maratis (447 households) and Nayakas (309 households). There were about 40 SC (Scheduled Caste) households. Geographically, the village was divided into different areas ('colonies') based on caste groups, with the SC families living on the outskirts of the village.

While it appeared that students from different caste backgrounds mixed well socially in school, the caste boundaries between students in Mallige HPS were at times strong and explicit. The lead girl and boy in standard 7 who co-conducted the daily morning school assemblies ('prayer') were both dominant-caste Maratis. Savitha, herself from the Nayaka community in the area, told me how Marati families showed more 'interest' in education, so their children were more 'brilliant'. Disproportionately to enrolment figures, five of the seven students who were awarded 'best student' prizes during Independence Day celebrations were from Marati backgrounds. (Jagadeesha, the standard 7 teacher who judged the awards, informed me that prizes were decided on the neatness of students' handwriting in their copy-writing books: a narrow criterion of achievement, reflective of the strong classification of valued outputs from the schooling process.)

Indeed, the social hierarchies of the Mallige community were seen to play out in the school context. I observed six Marati students who did not eat the lunch supplied free by the school. They would bring food from home and sit to eat it separately. One form of caste-based stratification in India is the refusal of some upper-caste members to consume food prepared by lower-caste people. The social politics of food runs deep in rural schools. At Mallige HPS, school lunches were prepared by three cooks. The Cluster Resource Person told me that a position remained vacant for a fourth cook and, according to regulations, the post needed to be filled by a local member of a marginalised community. However, the SDMC (School Development Management Committee, consisting of community members and parents) advised against employing a Scheduled Caste cook, warning that students would not eat the midday meal if it was prepared by a cook from this marginalised caste group.

The majority of students at Mallige HPS came from agricultural backgrounds. Most farmers in the village were small landholders, but there were about 180 households (out of 796 households) that did not own any land. The main crops in the area were cotton, *raagi* (millet), and tobacco, which were mostly on non-irrigated land. According to a 2007 local government survey, 517 families – about 65% of households – were identified as 'Below Poverty Line' (BPL) in Mallige village. Of course, the 'measurement' of poverty is complex and contested. In previous chapters, teachers' accounts of rural learners as uncivilised and uneducated point to social inequality and marginalisation beyond the snippets of economic data presented above. Indeed, school records at Mallige HPS indicate that many parents had little or no formal schooling. Of Savitha's class of 42 children, 25 fathers and 28 mothers were recorded as having not completed the first 5 years of schooling, and many had not attended school at all. Many of Savitha's students were first-generation school goers. Only three fathers and one mother had completed their standard 10 Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC). It should be noted, however, that the school's records do not provide insights into the educational backgrounds of students' extended families.

8.1.3 Community Relations

While the compound wall separated Mallige HPS from the village, boundaries between the school and the Mallige community were not always so concrete. For example, the people from the village would get involved in special events held by the school such as Independence Day celebrations and the annual School Day (a student talent event). Family members would come to the school to watch the events, and 'VIPs' from the village (the local dairy owner and other business owners) would preside over the function on the stage. Some members from the community donated sweets and stage decorations. A *Samudayadatta Shaale* (parent–teacher night) would be officially scheduled once a term for parents to meet teachers and discuss their children's progress. However, there was a very low turnout to these meetings – only six parents attended at the meeting I was able to observe, and teachers explained that this was typical.

An official interface between the school and community was created through the government-mandated, locally elected School Development and Management Committee (SDMC). During my research at Mallige HPS, the newly elected SDMC met weekly in the head teacher's office. Resources and budget for the upcoming School Day (talent show) function were discussed and planned during one meeting that I observed. The activities of the SDMC related largely to administrative rather than academic matters. Apart from the head teacher, the teachers of Mallige HPS did not attend these meetings. Savitha explained to me her disinterest in the SDMC, saying that it was 'all fully politics. That's all. They do their politics. We stay here (in the classroom) and teach the children the lessons'. Despite attempts by the state to weaken boundaries between school and community through the formation of the SDMC, a strong boundary existed between teachers and the community. This was maintained through the differentiated and hierarchic roles of the SDMC (administrative role) and of teachers (academic role) in schools.

Parents or guardians of children were also able to visit Mallige HPS during normal school days. Visits were most often made to seek permission from teachers to take children out of school for family festivals/functions or to explain previous absences. It was not uncommon to see parents waiting at classroom doors, arriving unannounced to speak to teachers about these matters. Mallige HPS parents had greater access to the school than parents at some of the private schools I visited in the Mysore area while conducting this study, which discouraged parents coming into the school during school time without appointments. However, as my previous chapters have detailed, the distance between the 'uneducated' home and the 'educated' knowledge of the school institution continued to demarcate parents from the practices of Mallige HPS. Teachers at Mallige HPS would frequently express their frustration that parents only came to school to seek leave for their child rather than to take interest in their child's academic progress. During one such discussion, Savitha reflected, 'they are uneducated, what else can they ask?' Indeed, teachers' assumptions about parents being 'uneducated' shaped the kinds of learning tasks that students were asked to do at home. The typical homework set by teachers for the younger grades (including Savitha's standard 2 class) was 'copy-writing' – the repetitive writing of a given word or sentence to practise handwriting skills. Strong boundaries between home and school knowledge were able to be maintained through such tasks as the written reproduction of given words did not require or encourage input from home.

The boundaries that maintained hierarchies within the school are examined further in the following sections. By looking at the institutional structures and cultures of Mallige HPS, I show how the *Nali Kali* child-centred pedagogy had an ambivalent relationship to the overall educational project of the school.

8.1.4 Institutional Cultures

The institutional organisation of Mallige HPS privileged a strong performance culture at the school in which the *Nali Kali* pedagogy for standards 1 and 2 was embedded. The child-centred model was recontextualised through hierarchies constructed around subject, grade, gender, and type of pedagogy at Mallige HPS.

There were 12 teachers (including the head teacher) who were officially employed at Mallige HPS though one was on 'deputation' to another school in a neighbouring cluster. Six of the teachers were women, mostly teaching the younger students. Each class for standards 1–4 was allocated one teacher to teach students all subjects in a fixed classroom. For standards 5–7, teachers were timetabled according to subjects (Mathematics, Kannada, English, Science, Hindi, and Social Studies) and they moved between classrooms to take these lessons. A male Physical Education (PE) teacher was employed though PE classes were rarely conducted, and he spent most days in the office room.

Like all workplaces, there were different alliances among the staff at Mallige HPS. Relations between staff were at times quite tense; the three female teachers taking standards 1, 2, and 3 tended to keep themselves apart from the other staff. They told me how the other teachers talked down to them because they taught at the lower primary level even though they were equally qualified and had previously taught higher classes. Sujatha explained to me one afternoon that 'they think we just play with these children. But actually, it is much harder to teach these small children. They come here raw'. In this school, hierarchic boundaries around early primary teaching were formed through assumptions about the perceived difficulty of instruction. Sujatha and Savitha (who taught standards 1 and 2 respectively) explained that the head teacher showed little interest in the lower primary levels. Savitha expressed her frustration that the head teacher never came to see what they were doing in their classrooms – particularly since they were located in a separate building on the opposite side of the school from his office. She quietly observed, 'I feel like getting a transfer, let me see…maybe next year. I need to be in a good environment, this is not like that. That tension is there, and we should be free. When we come to school we should feel free. Before, with the last HM and staff members, we all would talk together so much. We would all sit, and even talk after 4 o'clock. Now we just look at our watches, and as soon as it is 4 o'clock we want to leave'.

This glimpse into staff relations, particularly the boundaries that exist between teachers of different grades and even the physical boundaries between their classrooms, gives a sense of the strong classification of standards within the school. Standards 1 and 2 were set apart from other classes in the school. The *Nali Kali* program was positioned as specialised knowledge and practice; teachers across Mallige HPS and other schools in the cluster would refer to '*Nali Kali* teachers', or '*Nali Kali* classrooms'. This was not surprising given that standard 1 and standard 2 teachers had different pedagogic expectations placed on them, received separate training in the *Nali Kali* model, and were provided specialised teaching materials in the form of learning cards. When I asked the head teacher at Mallige HPS about the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, he immediately said he did not know much and referred me to Shobha and Savitha, as the '*Nali Kali* teachers'. The *Nali Kali* model for standards 1 and 2 demarcated those teachers and their pedagogic practices as distinct from the wider processes of the school.

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy was to be implemented alongside the strong performance culture of the school which continued to privilege textbook-based rote learning for examinations – what Bernstein referred to as a highly visible pedagogy. The performance orientation towards schooling gained further traction through government strategies to account for educational 'quality'. For instance, the 'performance' of government primary schools was assessed through state-wide standardised examinations conducted by the Karnataka State Quality Assessment Organisation (KSQAO (see Chapter 4 for more details)). The results of each school were compared across the cluster, block (*taluk*), and district and were often openly docu-

Table 8.2 Mallige 2005–2006 KSQAO results by subject and school, cluster, taluk, and district

	Kannada (%)				Maths (%)				Science (%)				Social Science (%) (EVS for std 2)			
	M	C	T	D	M	C	T	D	M	C	T	D	M	C	T	D
Std 2	63	61	69	66	51	55	66	61	–	–	–	–	75	79	80	80
Std 5	27	43	59	48	30	39	61	45	30	47	63	53	30	39	59	45
Std 7	39	51	63	54	19	32	53	41	29	44	64	51	23	43	62	47

Source: Compiled from Analysis Report by Mysore DIET, December 2006, and school and cluster data

M Mallige HPS, *C* Mallige Cluster average, *T* Taluk average, *D* District average

mented, as in Mallige, on chalkboards in head teachers' offices. As Table 8.2 reveals, Mallige HPS had a lower average performance compared to other regional results for the 2005–2006 examinations in almost all subjects and grades. The greatest difference between Mallige and the regional average was seen in standard 7 results.

The open display of comparative results was likely to be a measure of 'transparency' on the part of the state, but it caused significant unease among teachers, who felt their work was being scrutinised, particularly given the inspectorial cultures of the government school system (see Chapter 5). The consensus among Mallige teachers seemed to be that Mallige HPS was not recognised as a successful school, particularly in terms of students' learning but also with respect to staff motivation. The standard 4 teacher, Prasad, needed much reassurance that I had not come to Mallige HPS to investigate its (or his) seemingly low performance.

During informal discussions about the comparatively low performance of Mallige students in the KSQAO examinations, teachers explained that Mallige HPS was one of the few schools that did not 'cheat' during the preparation process. Teachers in my study described common practices of cheating in order to obtain a higher achievement for their school. This involved teaching students the answers to test questions through 'mugging up' (rote memorisation). In such cases, the *Nali Kali* child-centred principles of activity-based learning were significantly compromised by the processes of a competitive, performance-oriented system. The mechanisms used to assess students seemed to privilege strongly framed evaluation despite the child-centred ideals that were expected by the state to be practised in the younger grades.

Managerial demands in the school often produced practices that were not always in students' best interests. I discovered towards the end of my research at Mallige HPS that Sujatha and Savitha (the standards 1 and 2 teachers) would record students as present in their registers when in fact students were absent from school. In official documentation, Mallige HPS always looked like a fully attended school even though on average 6 or 7 children were absent each day during my observations of Savitha's class of 42 students. The fudging of attendance records was explained by the teachers as necessary so that sufficient grain and vegetable would be supplied by the government for the cooked lunches (the amount of food provided depended on student attendance). It was well known that grains and vegetables would often be skimmed off by those involved in the distribution of the supplies. Therefore, maximum attendance figures were required to prepare a sufficient number of lunches. The attendance register became a device to manage resource allocation. It had little to do with monitoring participation or attendance in school.

The *Nali Kali* pedagogy was to be implemented within a highly structured school context whose educational project was oriented towards tightly framed pupil performance. In the main, the school culture sustained the social boundary between the home and the school. Within the school, the social ordering of Mallige HPS occurred around caste hierarchies, the status and rigour of pedagogic instruction within a performance system, and the boundaries between teachers and pupils and between the school and the home. In light of these institutional contexts, I now discuss how the *Nali Kali* pedagogy was implemented in Savitha's standard 2 classroom.

8.2 Child-Centred Teaching in Savitha's Standard 2 Classroom

Schools are dynamic, often unpredictable places in which processes of social ordering take place. In his early work, Bernstein (1975) theorised the process of social ordering in schools by looking at school rituals. Rituals were seen to have a socialising function which aimed to

> relate the individual through ritualistic acts to a social order, to heighten respect for that order, to revivify that order within the individual and, in particular, to deepen acceptance of the procedures which are used to maintain continuity, order and boundary and which control ambivalence towards the social order. (Bernstein 1975:54)

During my research at Mallige HPS I observed the complexity of school life and attempted to identify some patterns and rituals in the school day. In this section, I discuss some of the school rituals at Mallige HPS and look more closely into Savitha's standard 2 *Nali Kali* classroom to see how *Nali Kali* child-centred principles were reworked by Savitha for her students. The discussions build a picture of what a *Nali Kali* education looked like and how Savitha shaped the rules of framing (control) in her pedagogic interactions. Using selected episodes of classroom practice, I analyse the pedagogic principles of *Nali Kali* instruction.

8.2.1 The School Day for Standard 2

Each morning, children waited outside the school and played until the caretaker arrived to unlock the gates. Most children walked to school with friends and relatives. After the gates were opened at about 9:20 a.m., students would play games, talk, or do their homework in the school grounds. During this time, duties such as collecting water for the staff toilets would be carried out, usually by two standard 7 girls. Teachers tended to arrive at school after 9:30 a.m. The school day formally began at 9:50 a.m. with a whole-school assembly ('prayer'). Daily assembly was seen by Bernstein as a 'consensual ritual', which aimed to integrate the 'various goals of the school within a coherent set of shared values, so that the values of the school can become internalized and experienced as a unity' (1975:55). Assemblies at Mallige HPS involved the recitation of the National Anthem and State Song. Military-style exercise drills were led by the standard 7 head boy, who would also read the day's newspaper headlines to the rest of the school. Announcements or reminders regarding upcoming events were made by teachers. Students were expected to stand in straight lines according to their grades. This grade-based organisation of students reflected what Bernstein called an 'age differentiating ritual' (1975:56). In Mallige, the boundary between students of different grades was strong.

At the end of the assembly, at about 10:00 a.m., the students would file into their classrooms in their line formation. Savitha taught her class of 42 standard 2 students in a classroom adjacent to the standard 1 classroom. The 5 m by 8 m classroom had a small wooden teacher's desk, a chest for teaching materials, a chair for the teacher, and a small wooden stool. Savitha had put up a number of charts on her classroom walls in addition to the *Nali Kali* learning cards and learning ladder, and children's craftwork. Each morning after assembly, the students in Savitha's standard 2 class played, or recited their numbers from 1 to 100. Ravi, the class leader nominated by the teacher, would stand in front of a numbers wall chart with the teacher's stick to instruct the class to recite after him. Ravi was labelled a 'brilliant' student by his teacher; the strongly stratified organisation of pupils (into grade, achievement level, etc.) made boundaries between students explicit.

During this early morning time, Savitha would be in the head teacher's office with the other teachers, signing in their attendance. Generally, the students were unsupervised for about 10 min, sometimes longer if a staff meeting was called or memos from the department were discussed. When unsupervised, the class was often noisy, with the children playing, laughing, moving about, and cheekily yelling the numbers out in a crescendo until laughter erupted, or until Ravi called them back to order. He would report back to the teacher about children's behaviour (such as fighting or not reciting), and Savitha would reprimand those students on her return (hitting with a bamboo stick was very common). I outline more about Ravi's role as the class leader in later discussions, but in this morning routine, it is evident how some authority was transferred to him by Savitha in her absence.

As the school day continued for standard 2 children, there were a number of practices through which hierarchic relations between pupils and teachers were established. Two girls in Savitha's class would carry their teacher's handbag to the classroom while she attended the morning meeting in the head teacher's office. Each day, they would run to her after assembly, keen to take her bag and carefully place it on her desk ready for her return. Savitha would generally arrive in her classroom just after 10 o'clock. When she entered the room, the students would immediately go quiet and stand to wish her good morning. They would recite the morning prayer in unison, a common Sanskrit Hindu *shloka* in respect of the teacher: *'Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Gurur Devo Maheshvarah. Guru Shakshat Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah'*. The authority of the teacher was emphasised through this ritual.

After the *shloka*, Savitha would ask the children to sit on the floor. Often she would take a seat at her desk to begin the roll call, which was recorded in a register and collected by the caretaker. Once this was completed, Savitha would usually ask her students, 'what did you eat for breakfast?' Each day, children were excited to tell their teacher what they ate, each day sharing similar responses by calling out types of food, to which Savitha would respond 'good', 'very good'. Savitha would ask children to put their hand up if they had eaten breakfast, and tell them it was important to eat breakfast in order to study well. Through this daily practice, Savitha was bringing students' home lives into the school and encouraging them to speak in class. A moral discourse was maintained, but this interaction also suggested a weaker framing over student expression.

After the breakfast ritual, Savitha would then ask students to stand and sing together. For about 5 min they would sing a repertoire of rhymes and songs with actions that they had been taught previously. The children seemed to enjoy this; they would laugh and sing along with enthusiasm. Sometimes Savitha would join in, but most often she would use this time to prepare for the first lesson of the day, prompting the next song from her desk. In this way, the sequence and pace (the use of time in the classroom) continued to be controlled by the teacher. The rhymes and songs reflected the *Nali Kali* recommendations to foster a 'joyful' classroom environment, but this did not necessarily imply a weaker framing over the nature of the activity.

From this glimpse of the first half hour in standard 2, one can get a sense of their codes of discipline and order relating to student–teacher relationships. On the whole, expectations for student behaviour were clearly established and controlled by Savitha. Students knew to be quiet in their teacher's presence, and that it was their duty to help Savitha, and respect and revere her (the message of the *shloka*). However, there were moments in which the boundary between the home and school was weakened, opening up the possibility for loosened framing of the teacher–student interaction. Savitha inquired into her students' home lives (what they ate for breakfast) which indicated some interest on the part of the teacher in students' experiences beyond the classroom. Thus, there were multiple authority relations at play even in this short period of time. Savitha explained how moving between different kinds of student–teacher relations was an important teaching strategy:

> …from morning to evening they [students] will go on seeing our face. If other teachers would come it would be different, like in HPS. In HPS there will be different teachers [for different subjects] and the teacher's personality itself will influence them. But since here, since they keep seeing us from morning to evening their mind will come to a block that 'oh, this teacher is like this, don't worry!' To that stage children will come! [*laughs*] So I always feel that there should always be some changes in the class. Like, to handle this, if we have a stick, they may feel fear that 'the teacher might beat us'. But we don't beat so much that the children will get hurt. (Savitha *NK* M1)

After the morning classroom rituals, the pattern of the school day was structured according to subject matter, but it deviated significantly from the 'official' timetable which hung on the wall of Savitha's classroom. (The official timetable had lessons like computers, PE, and craft regularly scheduled but these were rarely, if ever, conducted during my observations of Savitha's classes over 1 month). Kannada and

Mathematics were regularly conducted during the before-lunch and after-lunch periods. Environmental Studies, which usually involved storytelling, was conducted for about 20 min at the end of the day, on average twice a week. I observed two craft lessons during my time in Savitha's classroom, a scattering of English rhymes (as English lessons) and the weekly radio lesson during which children sat in silence to listen to the state-wide broadcast.[1] The organisation of the curriculum maintained strong boundaries between subject knowledges. This meant that subjects were not integrated into a theme but were presented as separate components of the syllabus, and language and mathematics were privileged over and above other subjects.

At least two recess breaks were taken during the day at Mallige HPS. The cooked lunch, usually of rice and *sambar*, was served to students at 12:45 p.m. by the cooks. Students from all grades would sit together outside to eat, and teachers took turns each week to supervise. When they were not on supervision duty, Savitha and her female colleagues Sujatha (standard 1) and Lakshmi (standard 3) would eat together in the standard 2 classroom. They shared the food they brought from home and lively conversations about their school and home lives. After students finished their meals, they washed their plates (which they had brought from home) and would then play in the grounds. Students were not firmly restricted to the school compound during the school day and some would return home quickly or run errands for teachers in the village. The control over the movement of these primary school students was to some degree weaker than that over many of their western counterparts.

At 1:30 p.m., the bell was rung by the school caretaker to indicate the resumption of class. Students would return to their classrooms, and teachers would go to the head teacher's room to sign the afternoon register. During this time, the higher classes would read their textbooks while they waited for their teacher to arrive. In standard 2, children either played in the classroom, recited numbers or words if lead by Ravi, or continued their copy-writing work upon instruction from Savitha. The afternoon classes usually began at 1:45 p.m. The last 30 min or so of the day were (unofficially) for 'leisure time', as one teacher, Jagadeesha, called it. During this time, students played in the grounds, and teachers would sit together and chat to wait for the bell to ring at 4:10 p.m. At the sound of the bell, students would clamour for the school gates, and teachers too would leave soon after.

This description of the school day has illustrated the structured, teacher-controlled organisation of time for standard 2 students at Mallige HPS. A strong framing over the sequence of student activity was observed. Boundaries between subjects, use of time, and use of space were explicit for students and teachers. In the following sections, I discuss how the dynamics of control shaped pedagogic interactions in the classroom. I begin that analysis by looking at how students were grouped in Savitha's class and what this implied for learning relations.

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[1] The radio-lessons were intended to be interactive. Teachers were supplied guide books containing activities that complemented the material that was broadcast. In Mallige HPS, standard 1 and 2 children were joined together for the lessons. This meant that up to 70 children in one classroom were expected to sit in silence with their fingers to their lips while they listened to the broadcast. On two occasions, Savitha spent the hour outside chatting to her colleague Sujatha while their students were inside.

8.2.2 Learning Relations

During lessons, students in Savitha's class would sit on the floor in six groups, each of about eight children. Painted circles on the concrete floor would mark out each group. The allocation of students into groups was determined by Savitha according to their learning levels – how 'fast' or 'slow' they were – meaning that students were explicitly differentiated. The 'fast' group sat towards the back of the classroom, and the 'slow' learners towards the main chalkboard at the front of the room. Ravi, the class 'leader' and part of the 'fast' group, was usually the first to begin reading exercises from the board to model expected outputs to other students. Savitha would describe students (in English) as 'fast'/'brilliant'/'good', 'middle', and 'slow'/'dull' to make distinctions between types of learners. She explained how she formed the groups as follows:

> In learning, if they are good, that will be one group. If they are a bit dull, that is another group. If they are more dull, that is another group…like this [we] will make groups. There we will make one leader. That leader will make others read and write. He will give the card, and he will read. And if anybody reads incorrectly, he will correct it…like that he will do. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Savitha explained how the groups were not fixed; students could move up if their learning improved. She pointed out to me two students who she had decided were able to change to the 'middle' group from being 'slow learners'. Such hierarchic boundaries between learners were explicit for the students with the open use of classificatory language and physical demarcations (circles for each group painted on the classroom floor). Despite the intentions of child-centred education to recognise multiple forms of student achievement and flatten achievement hierarchies, the differentiation of students in Savitha's classroom continued to maintain a strong hierarchic classification of learners.

The evaluative criteria which differentiated learners were not always transparent. Most students appeared to be at the same 'level' on the assessment chart that hung on the wall of the classroom. I observed Savitha filling in students' progress on the assessment chart; ticking the level of *Nali Kali* card that they had completed. The cards were designed so that students could learn at their 'own pace', but the class as a whole tended to work at the same time through the same learning card activity. This meant that most children were moving through the syllabus at the same pace. The exception was the 'dull' group who were often given different work but who were nevertheless recorded as being at the same level on the assessment wall chart.

The differentiation of students (set groups on the floor, according to perceived ability) and a demarcated area for the teacher (desk and chair) produced physical and social boundaries that shaped learning relations in the classroom. These boundaries kept students together or apart from each other and the teacher. The *Nali Kali* pedagogy encouraged a more democratic use of space and resources, and this was most clearly represented by the provision of student blackboards that lined the lower half of the walls of the classroom. These painted boards allowed space for all students to write, like their teacher, on a blackboard. However, as in the episodes of classroom practice presented below, such resources were not always used to support democratic classroom relations.

8.2.3 *Classroom Control*

It is 10:25 a.m. As part of the morning ritual, the children have been singing songs and rhymes, standing in their groups making actions to the words and giggling along. There are 33 children present today. Savitha sits at her desk with her 'teacher book' (syllabus portion guide) looking through the pages. She puts the book down and, remaining seated, says: 'Okay, stop…sit down'. The children sit in their groups on the floor, facing towards Savitha. She does not need to wait long before there is quiet, and begins the following:

Savitha: Have you all seen bees? Bees?
Students: [*in unison*] Yes!
Savitha: How are they? [*pause*] Do they bite? [*expression of fear*]
Students: [*in unison*] Yes!
Savitha: What do they do? Where do they live? [*pause*] Have you seen a bee's hive?
Students: [*in unison, but with some shuffling around*] Yes!

Savitha attempted to relate the topic of the lesson ('bees') to children's own experience. However, the framing of the interaction was strong: Savitha determined the sequence and pacing of questions (including the transition to this topic from the previous activity), and the series of question–answers conducted with the whole class did not allow for individual responses. Nevertheless, Savitha's tone was engaging and emotive, and the children seemed to be enjoying their teacher's performance. The lesson continued:

Savitha gets up from her desk and goes to the blackboard. She draws a picture of a bees' hive in a tree. Standing at the board, Savitha continues to ask the children questions.

Savitha: What will they do if you touch the hive? [*points to the picture on the board with her stick, eyes widening to indicate fear*] They will sting. What will they do? They will –
Students: [*in unison*] Sting!
Savitha: Where do we get honey?
Students: [*in unison*] Bees!
Savitha: Where do we get honey?
Students: BEES! [*some quiet laughter*]
Savitha: Yes, from bees. Good. What work do bees do?
[*students remain silent*]
Savitha: They go to flowers and get pollen and then make honey.

Savitha's words and actions were lively and expressive as she continued to pose questions to the class. The closed questions required students to produce single-word responses, which were often suggested in the question itself. When Savitha asked the open-ended question 'what work do bees do?', the children did not respond. Rather than prompting further, asking follow-up questions, or working through possibilities from their own knowledge base, she provided the answer quickly for them. In this sense, school knowledge was both strongly framed and had a strong classification (of a 'correct' answer). As the lesson went on, Savitha continued to relate the topic to students' experience.

Savitha draws a honeycomb shape on the board as the children look on.

Savitha: Have you seen this?
[*Some students remain silent, but a majority seem to answer, with less surety.*]
Students: Yes.
Savitha: Have you eaten honey?
Students: [*in unison with more enthusiasm*] Yes!
[*At this point Ravi, who is the class leader pipes up eagerly.*]
Ravi: I have eaten honey!
Savitha: [*speaking to the whole class*] Good. How did you eat honey? Like this? [*She enacts eating honey, with pleasure on her face, moving her fingers showing the sticky consistency. Most of the children follow her action, giggling.*]
Savitha: Okay, we shall write.

In the above episode of interaction, Ravi, the class leader, was able to share his individual response, 'I have eaten honey!' However, the rhythm of the question–answer interaction was maintained by Savitha who moved on to the next question directed to the whole class. Again, an open-ended question 'how do you eat honey?' was provided with a response for students to repeat, this time in mime. The control of the sequence and pace of the lesson was determined by the teacher. The next part of the lesson – 'okay, we shall write' – is described below.

Savitha takes a *Nali Kali* book from her desk to refer to as she writes three sentences on the board, one under the other. As she writes each word, she reads it out aloud, and the students, in loose unison, repeat the words. The sentences, written in Kannada, can be loosely translated as:
Bees get pollen from flowers.

(continued)

(continued)

With this they go to make honey.
Daily, we should eat honey happily.

Savitha: Okay. Do something. Can you all read this?
Students: [*in unison*] Yes.
Savitha: Okay.

Savitha stands by the board and reads each sentence word by word, pointing with her stick as she goes along. The children repeat each word as she says it. After the sentences have been repeated, Savitha asks about the students' experience.

Savitha: Who eats honey at home?
[*Some students begin to say 'me', then 11 students put their hands up.*]
Savitha: Good. Okay, now read. Ravi!

Ravi, from the 'brilliant' group, stands and reads the first sentence, and the class repeats in unison. Savitha says 'next!' to indicate that another student in the 'brilliant' group should read the next sentence, with the other students repeating in unison. Eyes are often not on the words; some students' backs are facing the chalkboard. This continues as the children take turns in reading a sentence each. Savitha sits at the side, correcting pronunciation. One girl, Sindhu, pauses. She looks to Ravi who tells her the pronunciation.

After about 12 students have read, Savitha moves over to the 'dull' group seated at the front of the room. While the other children are directed by Ravi in reading the sentences, Savitha gives two letters for the 'dull' group to practise writing on their slates. She watches them as they practise writing and saying the letters repeatedly. They show her their slates, and she corrects them. One boy, Manju, is not able to form the letters neatly, to Savitha's frustration. She shows him again with little patience, 'no! like this!' Holding the chalk piece tentatively, he slowly starts writing again. His face shows fear. Savitha grabs her stick from her desk and returns to him. His unsatisfactory handwriting leads to repeated strikes across his fingers. Manju did not cry though his face is full of fear.

The above segment of the Kannada lesson is one instance of a commonly observed approach to teaching 'reading' in Savitha's classroom. The use of repetition and reading in unison were common strategies. Savitha would first model the sentences, then she would choose Ravi to take over. Most students would get the opportunity to read a sentence, but not all would be given individual attention by the teacher. Children would repeat words in unison but often without their eyes on the letters, suggesting to me that they were engaged in verbal repetition rather than reading.

A number of lessons were available to be learnt during these episodes of teaching. Children may have become aware that honey is made by bees, from flowers. Another specific lesson objective was for children to read the three sentences. But beyond the specific content and skills that were intended to be transmitted through this interaction, certain social messages were also relayed to students. Through the order of participation by achievement groups, children would have learnt that they had been differentiated by academic achievement criteria. The ‘dull’ child in particular would have learnt that he or she had little agency in the pedagogic interaction, and students would have understood that failure has penalties, often of a physical nature. In terms of Ravi’s leadership in the class, though students were likely to be aware that learner differentiation is usually based on social criteria, Ravi was not from the upper-caste Marati community, who were most often seen as ‘brilliant’ in Mallige HPS. He was from the Nayaka community, categorised as ST.

During this lesson, the *Nali Kali* learning cards which contained various ‘activities’ for students to complete remained unused on the wall. On the rare occasions when the learning cards were used in Savitha’s class, they functioned as a teachers’ resource for whole-class instruction. Children in standard 2 did not have open access to the cards, which meant that their teacher maintained the control over the selection, pacing, and sequence of syllabus transmission. Savitha explained why she did not use the *Nali Kali* learning cards in the way they had been intended by the reform. She reminded me that these standard 2 students did not have a regular teacher in the previous year because of teacher shortages. She thus felt that the students had fallen behind.

> In first standard they did not learn anything. So I am doing it like this, that’s all. Otherwise, I would have done the groups, first group, second groups, like this…I would make them sit and teach them…each group would be given a different card. I would give the card based on the child’s ability. But now I can’t give like that because it will be difficult for me, and I can’t give the first standard cards. So what I will do is, I will teach them all together. (Savitha *NK* M1)

Although the *Nali Kali* cards were not used, Savitha often attempted to provide differentiated tasks according to students’ achievement levels. She often set a task for the majority of the class, then identified different work for the ‘dull’ group of about six students. However, as in the episode described above, the dominant strategy for teaching continued to involve repetition and drill despite the *Nali Kali* emphasis on ‘activities’ and TLMs (teaching–learning materials, often low-cost items such as string, pebbles, etc.). During the 4 weeks spent in Savitha’s classroom, I observed the use of stones (for a counting activity) and flash cards (to teach addition) on two occasions. She seemed to understand TLMs and such ‘activities’ as relevant for teaching ‘dull’ students rather than appropriate for all children.

> Now all children are not the same…their intelligence levels are not the same. Some will be dull, some will be fast…for some, if we tell orally, they will answer. If we ask questions orally, they will answer. But some children, if we ask them, they won’t answer. So we have to teach using all these TLMs […] Based on the child’s level of learning, we should teach. So if we use these types of TLMs it will be very effective for children’s minds. (Savitha *NK* M1)

In this class, the child-centred emphasis on student’s individual learning needs was re-contextualised through the explicit differentiation of student intelligence levels. In this iteration of progressive discourse, the ‘needs’ of the child refer to cognitive requirements and not necessarily their affective needs or interests. Repetition and closed questions were the dominant pedagogic approach in Savitha's classroom, where different learning styles or children's own knowledge were not central to the instruction. In the episode above, Manju was a 'slow' learner who was expected to repetitively repeat a task until he had memorised it. The pedagogic interaction in this case remained strongly framed and uniform despite Savitha's interpretation of a child-centred discourse that validated the individual child and their differences: 'all children are not the same'. In this case, the re-contextualised child-centred discourse reinforced a hierarchy of differentiated learners rather than challenging it. Arguably, such a hierarchy creates exclusion on grounds of individualised failure and legitimises the pulling back towards strongly framed forms of instruction.

The level of teacher input (and control) in the lesson described above has so far been high. However, at 10:50 a.m., just 25 min after the 'bee' topic was introduced and the reading task was set, Savitha left the classroom to sit outside on the verandah. The Kannada lesson continued until lunchtime in the following manner:

Savitha sits with Sujatha, the standard 1 teacher from next door, out on the verandah. They are putting together the year planner chart for the school to be displayed in the head teacher's office. The children continue inside, reading the sentences on bees in turn, with the rest of the class repeating in unison. Ravi directs which student takes the next turn. The 'dull' group continue tracing over their letters on their slates. The two teachers sit outside, near the open doorway, and manage the classroom noise by periodically saying loudly: 'Hey! Don't make noise!'

At 11:25 a.m., Savitha, still sitting outside on the porch says, 'okay, write the sentences'. The students go to the small chalkboards that line the walls of the classroom and begin to copy the sentences repeatedly, reading to themselves quietly as they write. Savitha remains outside. This goes on for over an hour while the two teachers chat and draw up the planning chart.

Some children come out to signal to Savitha they need to go to the toilet. She tells them to all go. The class file out for their recess break and are back in the room 5 min later. They are at their chalkboards writing, but their concentration seems to be waning as a few begin to chat.

At 12:40 p.m., Savitha says loudly from her seated position: 'Hey! Why all the noise?! Before lunch, each of you read the numbers. Ravi! You do it'. The 'bee' lesson finishes abruptly, and Ravi resumes the morning ritual instructing the reading and repetition in unison of the 1–100 number chart that hangs on the wall. This goes on for about 10 min until lunch is ready. Savitha and Sujatha return to their classrooms and tell the children to go for lunch. There is a clamour as children get their bags, plates, and water bottles to go outside for the break.

In the episode described, students were left to work on the set task without direct teacher interaction for over 90 min. During most of this time, they were repetitively writing the three sentences about bees (or repetitively writing two letters in the case of the 'dull' group). Most students were observed during this time to maintain concentration on the task, filling their chalkboards with the letters. Repetitive writing was a common feature of Savitha's Kannada lessons – it was understood as enabling students to practise and consolidate their writing skill and was seen as a key objective of the lesson.

Learning as 'copy-writing' output might suggest a performance-oriented pedagogy, but we might also understand this teaching mode as one part of Savitha's recontextualised child-centred practice. A sequence can be identified in her Kannada lesson, beginning with morning rituals (songs, discussion about breakfast), proceeding with question–answer interaction about bees and repetitive reading of given sentences, and culminating in practice writing for a significant period of time. Savitha explained that the sequence of instruction in her lessons was deliberately designed to achieve the desired learning output (in this case, writing practice). The decisions she made about what to teach when took into consideration children's affective needs and the assumed lack of 'care' in their home backgrounds.

> If we go *directly* to teaching, we won't be able to focus the children's minds. First, we should attract our children towards us and *then* if we do the lesson, it may be effective to children. Keeping this in mind, they have told us to teach songs to children or tell stories [...] So then the children will be happy...get attracted towards us, *then* we can move on to the lesson. Since at home they don't take much care of these children, we can't tell them straight away 'read this, or learn this'. If we do like this, it will have no effect on them. That is a problem. So, we have to make those children's minds clear, and *then* we should attract them to us, and *then* we should go to the lesson. And if I teach children without telling the concept to them, and if I tell them to write, then how will they write? Isn't it? First I have teach the concept, *then* only I can make them practice. We can't go directly... (Savitha *NK* M1)

Savitha's rationale takes into account children's affective needs but ultimately privileges the type of output (repetitive writing) associated with performance-oriented pedagogies. The consideration of children's affective needs was a response to students' 'neglected' or 'uneducated' home backgrounds (see Chapter 6); Savitha made this suggestion by indicating that a lack of parental 'care' for her students meant that she needed to 'attract' her students to learning. In this sense, the weakened framing of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy was recontextualised as a compensatory model, useful in addressing the assumed deficits of rural learners.

The *Nali Kali* model of student grouping was intended to enable greater peer interaction. However, during my study of Savitha's teaching, I did not observe the organisation of group work for learning tasks that involved dialogic or collaborative interaction between children. This is not to say that students did not interact in their groups – I often noticed children comparing each other's work, checking their answers, or chatting quietly during their set tasks. Indeed, in the last episode of the Kannada lesson, students were able to work independently (in their groups) on their tasks, which suggested a weak framing over the pedagogic interaction. However, this may have been because the task itself (the reproduction of given sentences) was strongly framed and had fixed outcomes. And, perhaps unfortunately, the organisation of group work also seemed to lend itself to the teacher's lack of active involvement in lessons.

The deeply set expectations of discipline meant that even when Savitha was absent from the classroom, students continued to carry out the required task.

> It is not necessary that we should always supervise…most of the children have got their own responsibility. We will tell them, and they will follow it. They will obey it… (Savitha *NK* M1)

Even if her consideration of children's needs resonated with a child-centred discourse, what should one make of Savitha's lengthy absence from the classroom? From her position outside, she was still able to manage children's behaviour and set new tasks through Ravi, the class leader. However, she was unable to provide feedback or support to the students as they went on with the writing task. With such lengthy teacher absences, the ideals of a highly interactive *Nali Kali* pedagogy are likely to be compromised. To a point, the notions of children's independence and responsibility were recontextualised to justify non-active teaching and even teacher absence despite the high demands of teachers made by the child-centred pedagogy.

One can see, in these episodes of pedagogic practice, how forms of control in classroom interaction were mediated by Savitha. Some child-centred principles were identified, such as Savitha's attempt to relate the bee lesson to students' worlds, her appeal to children's affective needs through 'joyful' rhymes and songs, and the weaker framing over informal discussions and teacher–pupil interactions (during, for instance, the morning breakfast ritual). However, the extent to which these principles of weaker framing were seen by Savitha as relevant to the acquisition of syllabus knowledge was ambiguous. The valued outcome of learning was still narrowly perceived as the written output of given sentences, though its implementation was not always relayed in the 'direct' way of a traditional pedagogy, but also through a recontextualised child-centred practice. The tightly framed syllabus structure discussed in Chapter 4 continued to govern lesson outputs, pulling Savitha back towards performance discourses and practices. The *Nali Kali* differentiation of students was recontextualised through an ability discourse, whereby the child-centred model was understood as a compensatory approach for rural students, and the non-involvement of the teacher was legitimised by the idealised independence and responsibility of students. Reflecting on these findings, the following section discusses the social messages circulated through these kinds of pedagogic interaction and through the boundaries, rituals, and controls at Mallige HPS.

8.3 Pedagogic Messages

This glimpse into a month of teaching at Mallige HPS has shown how the *Nali Kali* child-centred ideals were introduced into a performance-based, stratified system which maintained strong boundaries regarding teachers' work and student expectations. While the specific *Nali Kali* training and practice of standard 1 and 2 teachers provided these teachers with specialised knowledge, this knowledge was not necessarily valued within the strong grade-based achievement code that shaped the wider school curriculum.

The research revealed how teachers of younger grades were perceived to be of a lower status in the school. A perceived lack of rigour assumed in teachers of the young was arguably intensified by the 'joyful' learning approach of the *Nali Kali* pedagogy. It is conceivable that the low status of child-centred pedagogy suggested by the grade-based hierarchy of teachers' work validated the compensatory discourse that emerged. In another example of social stratification, it was propounded by the teachers of the younger grades that child-centred approaches (particularly strategies related to the affective needs of children) were particularly appropriate for the 'neglected' child. This belief strengthened (and perhaps derived from) the deficit discourses of the 'uneducated' rural child discussed in Chapter 6, despite the attempts of educational reforms to flatten social hierarchies by loosening authoritative controls over pedagogic interaction. In addition, social hierarchies were maintained by the strong boundaries between the home and the school; home knowledge did not appear to be relevant or to contribute to the acquisition of school knowledge. (This is explicable given that teachers were expected to work with a strongly framed selection, sequence, and pace of knowledge through the standardised syllabus.) The forms of community–school interfacing (the SDMC, use of homework) continued to produce assumptions about the 'uneducated' rural community. Thus, social messages of the hierarchic relationship between teachers and the community continued to circulate in the school through school practices. Within the school itself, rituals relating to discipline and moral behaviour relayed a stratified social ordering which controverted the democratic ideals of the child-centred pedagogy of standards 1 and 2.

Within the classroom, there were some tensions surrounding how 'learning' was to be understood in the reform context. The *Nali Kali* pedagogy depicted a place for laughter, happiness, and in some cases individual expression in the classroom. However, such modes of pedagogic interaction were not always related to processes of learning. Learning was largely understood as knowledge assimilation (the acquisition of the syllabus) rather than knowledge construction. While attention to the affective needs of children was encouraged by the *Nali Kali* pedagogy, in practice this did not necessarily imply greater student consultation or expression. The fixed syllabus which remained in place did not support a weakly framed, more democratic approach to knowledge acquisition. With 'real' learning not believed by either the teachers or the bureaucracy to take place through the 'joyful' aspects of the pedagogy (the affective discourse), a strong emphasis remained on the ultimate value of written output in schools. Letter formation through copy-writing tasks remained the purpose of the pedagogic interaction, regardless of whether a weaker framing over that interaction was attempted.

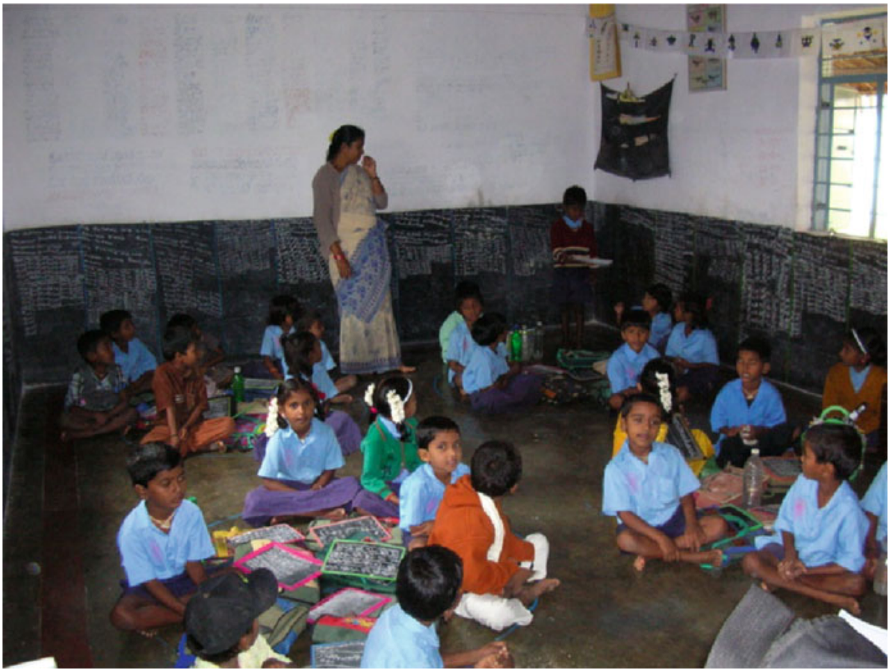
The privileging of this kind of written output was coupled with a strong ability discourse that was maintained in the school. Despite the complexity inherent in *Nali Kali* discourses of the 'active', 'joyful' child, my observational data revealed how students were differentiated by narrow criteria of evaluation based largely on the pace or 'brilliance' of their written output. Such stratification of students was strengthened by school rituals based on age/grade achievement. Through such boundaries, students learn that they are not equal. Within the classroom, performance stratification was explicit, and little agency appeared to be enjoyed by the 'dull' child in a strongly framed pedagogic interaction.

Mallige village

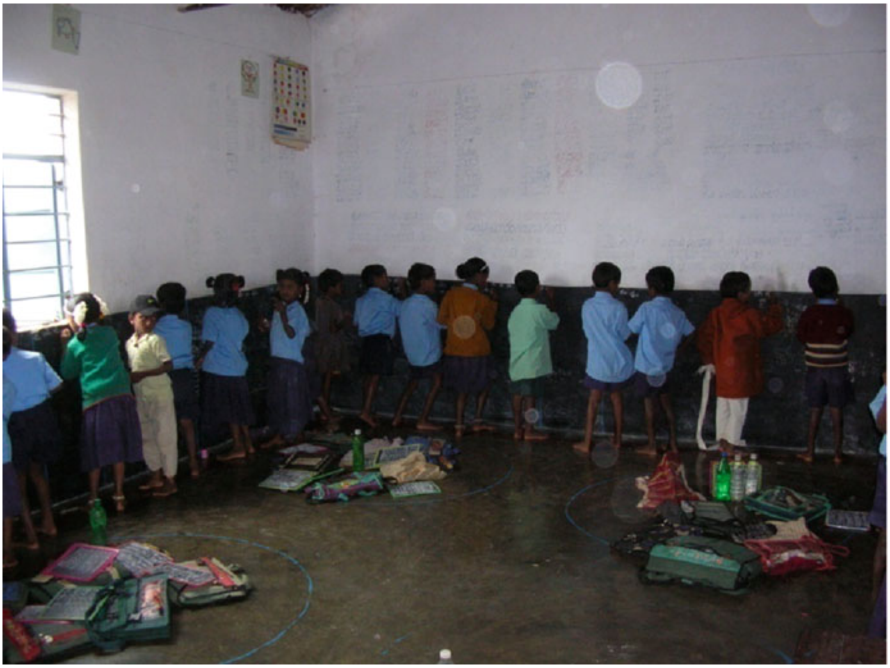
The road to Mallige village, children waiting outside the school gate in the morning

Lunchtime at Mallige HPS

Std 2, Mallige HPS



Nali Kali student-groups. Std 2, Mallige HPS



Students using wall blackboards. Std 2, Mallige HPS

By drawing on Bernstein's concept of pedagogic recontextualisation, this analysis has gone some way towards showing how policy ideals do not always map out as intended when put into practice. In the following chapter, I also use Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to analyse the mixes of pedagogic modes in the Kamala HPS context. The chapter investigates the recontextualisation of the *LC* pedagogy in Anitha's standard 2 classroom practice.

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Chapter 9
Learner-Centred Teaching at Kamala Primary School

This chapter examines how the *LC* pedagogy took shape in Kamala Higher Primary School (HPS), a large village school 23 km from Mallige. The *LC* pedagogy was introduced in Kamala HPS in 2005, replacing the *Nali Kali* program that was being implemented in standards 1 and 2. Building on discussions from the previous chapter, I show how child-centred ideas were recontextualised in Kamala school, this time focusing on Anitha's standard 2 class. The chapter also highlights some of the differences between *LC* and *Nali Kali* practices. Both programs sought to weaken the framing (teacher control) of classroom interactions. As we have seen, the selection and sequence of knowledge remained tightly categorised and controlled by the syllabus structure and standardised learning cards in the *Nali Kali* pedagogy. In contrast, the *LC* intention was to encourage a more open co-construction of knowledge through an integrated thematic syllabus and discussion-based pedagogic interactions.

To illustrate how teachers worked with these new pedagogic expectations, the analysis that follows focuses on the classroom practices of Anitha, a standard 2 teacher at Kamala HPS. Anitha was an experienced teacher, 39 years of age, who had been teaching in Kamala HPS for all of the 10 years of her career in the government service. Anitha had received training in the *Nali Kali* pedagogy before the introduction of the *LC* program. Her expertise in the *Nali Kali* pedagogy was recognised by the department, and she was a designated 'resource person' to help facilitate *Nali Kali* in-service teacher training. Anitha expressed a significant level of investment in the *Nali Kali* pedagogic approach and was at times critical of the new *LC* model she was expected to follow.

The chapter begins by describing the Kamala HPS context, which was somewhat similar to Mallige HPS in terms of its physical setting, community contexts, and school culture. The discussions focus on the processes of social ordering at Kamala HPS – the boundaries and hierarchies which shaped relations between students, between teachers, between the school and the community, and between the *LC* NGO and the school. I examine some of the rituals performed in the school to provide further insights into the social setting in which *LC* ideals were recontextualised. The

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chapter concludes by reflecting on the pedagogic messages relayed in Kamala HPS and the social implications of these messages for Kamala students.

9.1 School Environment, Community Contexts, and Educational Cultures

Kamala HPS was located in the centre of Kamala village, which was well connected by sealed roads and frequent public buses to the district centre of Mysore (25 km away) and other nearby town centres. Like Mallige HPS, Kamala HPS was a large government school. It had a student enrolment of 569 for standards 1–7. The school's 16 classrooms were set within large gated grounds. The school also had a head teacher's room in which staff meetings took place, a computer room in which six computers were installed,[1] a food storage room and kitchen for the preparation of cooked lunch. The cluster resource centre was also located in the school grounds, and this was sometimes used as a classroom or for special functions. The school field was used for the morning assembly, for students to play during break times, and for students to eat their lunch. There was also a small government Urdu school (standards 1–5) which operated separately from Kamala HPS but was located in the school grounds. The Urdu school had 21 students who were instructed by two teachers in the Urdu language, spoken by the Muslim population in Kamala village. The provision of a separate Urdu education meant that not many Muslim students attended Kamala HPS. The *LC* pedagogy was not implemented in the Urdu school.

The facilities and resources of Kamala HPS were similar to those of Mallige HPS: There was a water-pump on site, a part-time electricity supply that was used for radio and computer lessons, and a small selection of sport and music equipment that was used on special occasions. Classrooms had furniture for teachers' use (usually a desk, chair, and lockable chest). The classrooms for standard 7 had wooden benches for students to use, and in other classrooms, students sat on the concrete floor. Classrooms varied in size and dimension; Anitha's room for standard 2 was about 6 m by 6 m with two windows which let in much natural light. Most classrooms had wallcharts or wall paintings, a large chalkboard and, for the younger grades, student chalkboards that lined the lower half of the room. There was a locked cupboard of books and resource material in the head teacher's office that students did not seem to have open access to. Though the *LC* NGO had provided some resources such as paper, workbooks, and coloured crayons to the *LC* classes, overall the facilities and teaching resources at Kamala HPS were comparable to other government schools in the area.

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[1] The computers had been donated by a large NGO but students did not have access to them yet, so they were mostly unused.

Table 9.1 Student enrolment by gender and caste category in the academic year 2007–2008, Kamala HPS

Caste	SC			ST			Other			Total		
Std	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1	0	3	3	12	13	25	8	4	12	21	20	41
2	3	5	8	10	22	32	4	6	10	18	33	51
3	8	7	15	15	24	39	7	9	16	30	40	70
4	0	4	4	18	23	41	9	3	12	27	30	57
5	8	7	15	16	21	37	9	14	23	35	43	78
6	18	17	35	21	34	55	19	22	41	73	70	143
7	13	19	32	21	34	55	19	22	41	54	75	129
Total	50	62	112	120	159	279	81	89	170	258	311	569

Notes: *M* denotes male students, *F* denotes female students, *T* denotes total number of students. Caste categories are those that are used by the school: *SC* for Scheduled Caste, *ST* for Scheduled Tribe, and *Other* for all other caste groups. See Appendix for notes on caste in India

9.1.1 Students at Kamala HPS

Kamala HPS was a large school in terms of student enrolment. The lower primary schools (standards 1–5) of the surrounding villages in Kamala cluster were feeder schools for Kamala HPS, which resulted in greater numbers of students at standards 6 and 7. There were a number of private fee-paying schools in the surrounding area that children of the wealthier farmers attended. Teachers described to me how enrolments had dropped in government schools in recent years as parents sought English-medium education in nearby private schools. This meant that their students were increasingly from poorer backgrounds. Table 9.1 depicts the student enrolment for each standard, by gender and caste category, for the academic year 2007–2008. The large number of students in each grade resulted in two ‘sections’ or classes for standards 1–5, and three sections for standards 6 and 7. This division of classes meant that Anitha’s standard 2 class had an enrolment of 27 students, which was significantly smaller than Savitha’s class of 42 at Mallige HPS.

These enrolment figures were obtained from the chalkboard in the head teacher’s office. The open display of such information indicates how the classification of students by gender, caste, and grades was overt. The social differentiation of students was also made explicit in classrooms as teachers would record the daily attendance numbers on the blackboard each day by caste and gender categories. As at Mallige HPS, the majority of students at Kamala HPS came from the Nayaka community, classified as ST (Scheduled Tribe). In Mallige village, the dominant-caste Marati community primarily constituted the ‘other’ category. However, in Kamala, this category was more differentiated, including students from Lingayat, Vokkaliga, Shetty, and other communities. Kamala village was more diverse in terms of caste than Mallige.

According to a local survey conducted in 2007, the total population of Kamala village was 4,842 people. Most students at Kamala HPS came from agricultural backgrounds, though Kamala village had a number of small businesses: tailoring services, stationery stores, variety stores, food stores, and teashops, for example.

There were 1,121 households in the village, and only 95 of these had no agricultural land. The main crops grown in the area included *raagi* (millet), coconut, banana, mango, and cotton. Like Mallige village, Kamala was serviced by a bank, post office, and a health clinic, and had mobile phone reception. Some 800 households had electricity connection. There seemed to be a significant movement of people between the village and Mysore, which was a rapidly expanding and modernising town. Kamala village was categorised as 'rural' according to the government census, but it was more like a semi-rural township. With land prices in Mysore rising, new housing developments were seen along the Kamala–Mysore road. Kamala village, positioned along the busy road, presented as a busy business community.

The 2007 local survey identified 755 households in Kamala village as being below the poverty line, a similar proportion to that in Mallige village. The low completion rate of formal education in the village was another dimension of Kamala's social disadvantage. According to school records, in Anitha's standard 2 class of 27 students, just over half had parents who had not attended school. Only nine students had at least one parent who had completed the first 7 years of school. These figures indicate how many of Anitha's students were first-generation school goers.

Thus, Kamala HPS served a large and diverse community. Social inequity in the village existed in the forms of caste-based, economic, and educational disadvantage. Student stratification by gender, grade, and caste was made explicit in school enrolment records. The village's proximity and accessibility to the large, modern town of Mysore, and growing urbanisation in the area, suggested that students at Kamala HPS were not altogether isolated from urban life.

9.1.2 Community Relations

As discussed in Chapter 6, boundaries between rural children's homes and the school institution were formed along social and educational hierarchies. Deficit assumptions about the 'uneducated' and 'uncivilised' rural population bolstered the strongly framed socialising role of the school. Chapter 8 examined the interface between Mallige HPS and the Mallige community to show how the physical borders of the school and the interactions between parents and teachers produced a marked differentiation between the worlds of school and home for rural children. Similar boundaries insulated the school from the home in the Kamala context. Anitha felt that a lack of parental interest in schooling produced the separation between society and the school.

> Parents should come and mix with us. They should always come and ask us 'what, what, what' about their children. And the village people should be with [support] us. And the village should always be with [support] the school. Both the society and school should be together. But nobody will come. They don't have interest. (Anitha *LC* K1)

Anitha attributed the lack of home–school interaction squarely to parents, and was not in this instance sympathetic to parents' unfamiliarity with school processes, given that many had not participated in formal education themselves.

The difficulty of encouraging parents to have greater participation in Kamala HPS was observed during a parent–teacher night. *Samudayadatta Shaale* (loosely translated as 'community school') was held once a term in all government primary schools in the area. *Samudayadatta Shaale* attempted to provide the opportunity for teachers to discuss with parents their children's progress and also for parents to see children's cultural performances and award ceremonies. During my research at Kamala HPS, I was able to observe a *Samudayadatta Shaale*. Five members of the School Development Management Committee (who were also parents) and four more parents/guardians met with teachers and the head teacher in the office room shortly after 4.00 p.m. The teachers and parents were seated around the large table and on the benches to the side of the room. Parents did not meet teachers individually. Not all teachers attended the meeting. Saraswathi explained as she left school early that none of the parents from her standard 1 class were going to come to the event. Anitha came to the meeting, but none of the parents from her standard 2 class attended. The low attendance of family members at the meeting validated teachers' assumptions about the lack of parental 'interest' in school.

Parents and teachers mostly waited in silence for the meeting to begin. There was the odd brief exchange between teachers and some members of the SDMC. I sat next to Raju, a young teacher who was keen to practise his English with me. The meeting was led by Nirmala, one of the senior teachers at the school. Taking on an official tone to indicate the start of the meeting, and glancing across to me, Nirmala asked one of the participants if her niece was studying well at home. The aunt replied with a quick 'yes'. Nirmala then asked the standard 6 teacher Shashikala if Suresh, a young boy in her class, was writing well. Suresh's father was sitting at the table. The teacher responded with no more detail than 'yes, he is writing'. This type of dialogue between parents and teachers, controlled by Nirmala, continued for a few moments. It was a structured interaction, perhaps staged for my benefit. Nirmala's questions were closed and almost abrupt. Later, Raju told me:

> These parents have no interest at all. See, only a one or two will come for this and inquire about their children. They also have work, and this is the season to be in the fields. So it is hard for them. Even if they do come, it is difficult. What can we say to them? They are illiterate, they don't know anything. So they come, and we say your son is good, and they sign and go.

After about 15 min, the meeting came to a close with Nirmala announcing a short cultural performance by children and the presentation of some school awards. At this point, the atmosphere became more informal and relaxed, and teachers and family members sat outside the office room to watch the performance and presentation.

In this interaction, a distance between the home and school was maintained through teachers' assumptions about 'uneducated' families. The deficit discourses of the rural community revealed explicitly in Raju's commentary were pervasive in Kamala HPS. Teachers seemed unsure how to communicate students' progress to 'illiterate' parents beyond general statements about students' writing. Because written output (copy-writing, examinations) is so highly valued, teachers were not used to commenting on other aspects of students' educational experiences. Development concerns for greater literacy in rural areas narrowed the focus of the school, despite the widening of evaluative criteria by child-centred models to promote independence, creativity, and activeness in learning. The new forms of qualitative evaluation that *LC* teachers were expected to make of their students might have been difficult to communicate to parents who were unfamiliar with the broader pedagogic goals of the child-centred program.

9.1.3 Institutional Cultures

Kamala HPS had a large staff of 20 teachers. The official student–teacher ratio of 1:28 was notably smaller than at Mallige HPS (1:35). These ratios do not take into account teacher absences and deputations, which were frequent in both schools. The teachers at Kamala HPS all held the teacher's certificate higher qualification, which they had completed after their standard 10 or standard 12 studies. Five teachers had completed degree-level courses. The school had mainly female teachers; 15 of the 20 teachers were women, and they mostly taught the younger students.

A disproportionate number of teaching staff at Kamala HPS were from upper or dominant caste backgrounds. Seven of the teachers were from upper-caste Brahmin communities, and four were from dominant-caste backgrounds (Lingayat and Vokkaliga – see notes on caste in Appendix). Thus, in terms of caste hierarchies, the social distance between the students and teaching staff was marked at Kamala HPS. The urban middle-class lifestyles of most teachers also underscored this distance. Many teachers had grown up in nearby rural or semi-rural areas but had settled in Mysore town and would travel to school by bus each morning. All teachers at Kamala HPS had their own children enrolled in private (fee-paying) schools, mostly English-medium institutions in Mysore. The easy access to Kamala HPS from Mysore made it a much sought after placement for teachers living in Mysore. It was widely acknowledged among teachers that social influence and bribes were significant in securing a post at a conveniently located school.

Unlike Mallige HPS, standards 5–7 did not have specialist teachers for subjects, except for Hindi and physical education. With each grade being taught in separate classrooms, there was a strong classification of teaching staff according to grade level. Furthermore, a distinct classification of teachers was created by the *LC* program which produced specialised pedagogic knowledge to be held only by teachers of standards 1–5. The ten *LC* teachers at Kamala HPS would attend monthly NGO-led trainings ('teacher collectives') instead of the government-run in-service programs which were mandatory for their non-*LC* colleagues. The *LC* teachers were thus insulated to a certain degree from government training activities and state pedagogic expectations. The *LC* emphasis on an integrated syllabus, discussion-based interaction, and qualitative evaluation created new orientations in the work of these teachers.

However, even though it was implemented in a majority of Kamala HPS classrooms, the *LC* pedagogy was not necessarily making deep institutional-level changes. There was a sense that the *LC* program was experimental, temporary, and at the edges of the established school process. Teachers often expressed a feeling of reform fatigue. Describing the fleeting nature of reforms, standard 1 teacher Saraswathi positioned teachers as technicians who were required to ‘adopt’ whatever the prescribed school policy was at the time. Teachers’ agency over pedagogic decisions in their classrooms was in this sense restricted.

> Now, they are telling to do like this…now we are involved in this…when we are involved in this, we will develop our children in this way. Whichever method they say…even we don’t know, right? However the training is given, we will adopt that training here. And in future if they come to know that this method is not good, maybe they will give some other training. We don’t know what they will do. The government, or other organisations, how will we know where they are coming from? If they tell us to adopt, we will do that. (Saraswathi *LC* K1)

Intra-school relations did not always encourage a positive and respectful professional culture at Kamala school. Deep divides existed between groups of staff. Differences were often explicitly political in nature, with many staff openly voicing disagreements about union politics and grievances with the education bureaucracy. Teachers were visibly divided into groups. They would often visit each other’s classrooms during the day to chat and gossip, leaving their students unsupervised for lengthy periods of time. Anitha openly spoke about her dissatisfaction with the head teacher of the school, who she felt showed little respect for teachers and their work.

> …politics will come into all this and so pressure will be here, and this man [the head teacher] will not do his job well…If he treats us like labourers working in the field, then I will think ‘I am a teacher, he should respect me’…so like this, so much quarrelling will go on… (Anitha *LC* K1)

These types of tensions created ‘pressure’ for teachers who, as I describe below, were also dealing with the demands of a competitive performance culture in the school.

9.1.4 School Performance

A significant intention of the *LC* program was to reform the mechanisms of student evaluation. In the *LC* pedagogy, student performance was to be more differentiated, expanded to include criteria beyond written output, like expressiveness and activeness. The process of evaluation was to be rendered less explicit by conducting qualitative observations rather than examinations, and the program emphasised that teachers should not overtly compare or rank students. However, a culture of examination was deeply embedded in the school, which emphasised an evaluative system of explicit and strongly framed performance ideals.

Like Mallige HPS, Kamala HPS was required to take part in the state-wide Karnataka State Quality Assessment Organisation (KSQAO) examinations for Kannada, Mathematics, Science, and Social Sciences. These externally administered examinations for standards 2, 5, and 7 were intended to standardise and measure student achievement levels in each subject. There were some attempts by the

Table 9.2 Kamala 2005–2006 KSQAO results by subject and school, cluster, taluk, and district

	Kannada (%)				Maths (%)				Science (%)				Social science (%) (EVS for Std 2)			
	K	C	T	D	K	C	T	D	K	C	T	D	K	C	T	D
Std 2	–	–	69	66	–	–	66	61	–	–	–	–	–	–	80	80
Std 5	47	59	59	48	82	70	61	45	76	68	63	53	74	68	59	45
Std 7	62	47	63	54	64	56	53	41	69	61	64	51	63	57	62	47

Source: Compiled from analysis report by Mysore DIET, December 2006, and School & Cluster data

K Kamala HPS, *C* Kamala cluster average, *T* Taluk average, *D* District average

LC NGO to insulate or protect the ideals of the *LC* pedagogy from the KSQAO process. For example, standard 2 students in Kamala HPS were exempt from participating in the first 2 years of the KSQAO examinations. An *LC* officer explained to me that the written standardised tests would contradict the expansion of learning indicators that the *LC* program was trying to promote. The exemption of *LC* classes from state examinations highlights how *LC* teachers were expected to work through competing agendas in schools.

Many teachers in Kamala cluster described how the KSQAO exerted upon them significant pressures. Teachers worked longer hours teaching additional classes to prepare students for the examinations. The open ranking of results was not only an indication of student performance, but it also brought teachers, schools, and regions into competition. The KSQAO results from Kamala school, cluster, and *taluk* presented in Table 9.2 were on open display on the chalkboard in the office room of Kamala HPS. The results indicated that Kamala HPS had slightly higher achievement levels in the examination than cluster and *taluk* averages.

The state-administered KSQAO examinations represented a strong framing (control) over teachers' work. A strong classification of subjects and of the expected outputs of learning was emphasised in the evaluative process. In this sense, the *LC* ideals of integrating subject-knowledge and expanding the evaluative criteria of students were located within a somewhat contradictory and competitive performance-based system. The evaluative expectations placed on Anitha's standard 2 children would change as they moved from the weakly framed *LC* model in standards 1–5 to the strongly framed examination-based model in higher grades and beyond. The boundaries that insulated *LC* students from the state activity (for example, the exemption of standard 2 from state-wide testing) placed the NGOs ideals to the fringe of school life and produced competing pedagogic messages for teachers and students.

9.1.5 The NGO–School Interface

Kamala HPS was a 'typical' rural government primary school in that the physical setting and staffing structures described above were similar to Mallige HPS and other government schools in the area. However, the presence of the *LC* NGO in the Kamala region impacted on some aspects of school life at Kamala HPS, such as the availability of resources to students. The NGO office was located in Kamala village, just a 5-min walk from the school. Often after school hours a small group of standard 7 girls would go to the NGO office to look through the supply of books that the NGO had put on open display. The girls had limited access to reading material within the school. Like many schools in the area, Kamala HPS did have a supply of books, but they were stored in a locked cupboard in the head teacher's office. The presence of the NGO in Kamala thus increased the facilities available to these students. The NGO also provided some teaching resources for standards 1–5 in Kamala cluster, such as crayons, writing paper, worksheets, and folders for students to keep their work in.

The NGO presence at Kamala HPS also changed some of the processes and experiences of accountability, autonomy, and pedagogic support for teachers. For example, NGO officers periodically visited *LC* classrooms to supply teachers with new resources, discuss progress and any issues, and observe teachers' practices as part of an on-going evaluation of the program. The NGO officers reiterated to teachers during monthly meetings that their role was to provide pedagogic support for teachers rather than to monitor or assess teachers. In neighbouring Mallige cluster, pedagogic support for teachers was officially the remit of the Cluster Resource Person, though their interaction was largely limited to the communication of departmental memos and other bureaucratic matters. In Kamala cluster, the role of the government Cluster Resource Person seemed to be similarly centred around bureaucratic administration rather than pedagogic support and advice. Thus, with the presence of the *LC* officers, teachers at Kamala HPS experienced new forms of both pedagogic support and professional accountability.

The close involvement of *LC* NGO officers in Kamala HPS meant that *LC* teachers had greater engagement with the 'official' pedagogic ideals of the reform than did their *Nali Kali* colleagues. In-service training sessions (called 'teacher collectives') were held at the NGO office in Kamala village each month, during which teachers planned learning modules and discussed the development of the *LC* program. The NGO representatives emphasised to teachers that the *LC* pedagogy was an evolving approach, shaped by the needs of students, teachers, and school contexts. On one level, the participation of teachers in the development of the pedagogy gave teachers greater ownership over *LC* ideals. On another level, the close involvement of NGO officers in teachers' work enabled the NGO to have a tighter control over the reshaping of *LC* ideals in schools.

The *LC* reforms were met with significant resistance on the part of some teachers. Anitha in particular was initially very vocal in her objections to the program. She took up her concerns with the District Director of Public Instruction as follows:

> Sir, I can't do it sir, it is so much work on our minds. Our minds are jammed. We don't know what work has to be done. If it happens to us like this, how can we teach and give [to] our children? We are taking salary from government, what we are doing is cheating the children. We are not able to do it.

In Anitha's account of her interaction with the director, her objections were to no avail.

> Like this, there were so many discussions, but an order came from the Commissioner. They pressurised us, in that Commissioner's order. I cried a lot, thinking that I was cheating my children, I can't do this. It is too painful. I cried, but nobody cared here. I begged other teachers to take this second standard…for ten years I am taking second standard, but nobody cared…[*laughs*] But later, what to do? This is my profession and I have to do it, right? So I accepted it…When all the officers are telling, I have to bow my head to it. (Anitha *LC* K1)

Anitha's comments illustrate the authority of officers in the Karnataka education bureaucracy and the limited autonomy teacher have with respect to their pedagogic practices. With the arrival of the *LC* program, teachers in Kamala were now also held to the demands made by the NGO. Anitha expressed her frustration that the responsibility to deliver the *LC* reforms had been placed squarely upon teachers rather than there being a more systematic attempt to bring about pedagogic change.

> Now, as soon as a child is born, can it walk? It has to take it step by step, and then he will walk. What we told them during the training time is, 'don't give us training. Don't take our school. Don't take our cluster. First do training to the TCH [teacher training] students. Tell them to teach like this and use the method like this when you go to the schools. Give training to *them*. Give training to *them,* and give it to the BEO, DDPI, and for BRCs.[2] Later, give it to us. *They* should first come to think, 'is this training good?' Aren't I correct? In *Nali Kali*, everybody, from the DDPI to…they all got training. And they arranged the card system. In the same way, give training to *everybody.* How *their* mind will work, even *we* will work like that. But nobody listens to us. They went on giving us pressure, 'do it, do it, do it!' So we did it. (Anitha *LC* K1)

Anitha conveyed the pressure placed on *LC* teachers to be the primary change-agents in a system in which they had arguably very little autonomy. They were expected to work within an established and at times a competing social and educational framework. In the next section, I analyse more closely how Anitha worked with the *LC* pedagogy in her standard 2 class.

9.2 Child-Centred Teaching in Anitha's Standard 2 Classroom

Anitha taught 27 standard 2 students in a classroom located near the office-room, towards the front of the school. The location of classrooms at Kamala HPS was not based on grade-levels as it was at Mallige HPS. As detailed before, the room was about 6 m by 6 m with two windows looking out to the school field. A large blackboard was on one wall, and smaller blackboards for students lined the lower half of the other walls. Picture charts had been hung around the room, and letters of the Kannada alphabet, numbers, and names of months had been painted on the upper half of the walls. There was a desk, chair, and cupboard for the teacher's use. Students sat on the slate floor. Along one side of the room were folders which had been provided by the

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[2] These stand for the administrative positions and centres of the education bureaucracy. BEO is the Block Education Officer, DDPI is the Deputy Director for Public Instruction, and the BRC is the Block Resource Centre.

LC NGO for the filing of each student's work. Written work was often done on loose-leaf paper provided by the NGO rather than on the more typically used slates.

In the discussions below, I analyse selected episodes from Anitha's standard 2 class to explore how controls over pedagogic interactions, particularly over the selection and sequence of knowledge, shaped learning processes for Anitha's students. I begin by exploring the ways in which social ordering takes place in the classroom by looking at the structure and rituals of the school day for standard 2 children.

9.2.1 The School Day for Standard 2

The school day in Kamala HPS was similar to the school day in Mallige HPS. Official school activity began just before 10.00 a.m. with a whole-school assembly. During the assembly, children stood in lines according to their class-groups to recite the national anthem and state song, and announcements were made by teachers. A high level of discipline was expected, even of very young students. Children were reprimanded by teachers if they were not paying attention, not standing still and straight, not singing along when required, or not dressed in their uniforms neatly. Bernstein suggested that rituals 'give the school its specific identity as a distinct and separate institution. They facilitate appropriate sentiments towards the dominant value system of the wider society' (Bernstein 1975:55). At Kamala HPS, the highly disciplined assembly ritual communicated to students messages of allegiance to the nation, state, and school.

Just after 10.00 a.m., students would file into their classrooms while their teachers went to the office-room to sign in their attendance. Anitha often arrived late to school, and her students would play, chat, and run around in their classroom while they waited for her to arrive. During this time, two girls would sweep the floor each day and prepare the classroom before the teacher arrived. Kavya, the leader of the class, would sometimes tell her peers to be quiet if it got too noisy, but she did not tend to instruct students to do schoolwork during this time. The transfer of authority to Kavya in Anitha's absence seemed less clear in comparison to the explicit control held by the lead boy in standard 2 at Mallige HPS.

The *LC* reforms had introduced an integrated thematic curriculum, so the official standard 2 timetable for the day was not organised around subject lessons. Unlike at Mallige HPS, an official timetable did not hang on the wall; however, the structure of learning activities became quickly apparent. The day was usually split into two sections: discussion-based interactions in the period before lunch and written work in the period after lunch. The *LC* pedagogy recommended that teachers conduct whole-group and small-group discussions with students before providing them with written work for 'individual practice time'. The small-group and whole-group formats meant that students were not always sitting in a fixed group. This was one attempt by the *LC* reform to diversify the social relations between students beyond the hierarchic student grouping found in *Nali Kali* classrooms.

9.2.2 Classroom Control

I now consider more closely the social and pedagogic relationships within Anitha's classroom. The analysis examines how the lessons learned in the classroom were about social authority and control as much as about syllabus knowledge.

It is 10.20 a.m. when Anitha enters the classroom. There are only 19 students present out of the 27 enrolled. The children quickly quieten down and stand to recite the *guru brahma shloka* (see Chapter 8) while Anitha listens to them. When they have finished, she tells them to sit in a circle in the centre of the room for meditation. The students move into a circle, and Anitha sits on the floor with them. The room is still and quiet while the children sit in silence with their eyes closed. After a few minutes, the teacher calls the meditation to an end, and the children rub their faces and eyes to focus back to the lesson.

Anitha stands and goes to her desk to take the attendance roll-call. The children remain seated in the circle. Anitha was absent yesterday, and the class did not have a replacement teacher. She asks the children to put their hands up if they were absent yesterday and gets those who were to explain why. She listens to the children's explanations but does not make any verbal response.

Anitha then tells the children to sing while she sits at her desk filling in the register for yesterday and today. Kavya, the lead girl in the class, leads the children as they stand in a circle performing a routine of songs and actions. Many students are laughing along, and they seem to be enjoying this activity. At the end of each song, Anitha asks, 'okay, which song next?', which prompts Kavya to lead a new one. The children sing five or so songs, and Anitha completes the register. She then asks the students to sit in one large circle on the floor and sits down with them to begin the lesson with a whole-group discussion.

A number of social messages can be identified in the classroom rituals described above. Expectations of reverence and respect towards the teacher were conveyed through the recitation of the Hindu *shloka*. These expectations took on an explicitly religious frame despite the officially secular status of the school. The morning meditation ritual was not part of the official practice in government schools; Anitha spoke to me about the influence of her involvement in the *Brahma Kumaris*, a Hindu-based spiritual movement which emphasises meditative practices. She described how meditation helped her develop a 'peaceful' philosophy towards teaching. For students, the meditation ritual relayed messages that were derived from religious values.

The episode also showed that Anitha's authority in the classroom was understood clearly by students but did not always need to be made explicit by the teacher. As soon as Anitha entered the classroom, students went quiet and recited the *shloka* without being prompted verbally. The teacher maintained control over the sequence of activities, for instance directing the end to the meditation and instructing students to start singing. While Anitha conducted her administrative duties, she transferred her authority to the lead girl, who chose and led the songs. Students enjoyed the ritual of singing each morning. With the advent of *Nali Kali* and *LC,* there was a place for this kind of enjoyment in school, where previously such activities would not have been so common. In this sense, the child-centred reforms introduced new kinds of interactions and authority relations into classrooms.

I now look more closely at the control of classroom interactions. The following episode describes Anitha's conduct of the whole-group discussion.

The whole-group discussion begins by Anitha asking 'what do you do as soon as you wake up?' Three children call out their responses enthusiastically.

S1, S2, S3: Wash face! Drink coffee! Have bath!

Anitha: Really? Do you do that first? What do you do *immediately* after you wake up?

S: Go to toilet!

Anitha: Yes, that's right, then after, wash, and put on clothes…What clothes?

S: Uniform!

Anitha: Good. Now at this time of year, what kind of clothes do we wear?

S: Sari!

Anitha: Really? Sari? Do you wear sari? [Young girls would not wear saris.] What season is it now?

S: Rainy season!

Anitha: Yes! See the months. [*points to the list of months of the Hindu calendar painted on the classroom wall*] For these four months it is the rainy season. And in this time…What is the English name for *Chaitra Maasa?* [*silence*] What is the name of this season now?

After an initial silence, some students say 'rainy season', while others begin to recite the names of the months, '*Chaitra, Viasakha, Jyaistha, Asadha…*'. Anitha stops them.

Anitha: Okay, in English? Lakshmi, you say – what is *Chaitra* in English?

Lakshmi: April!

Anitha: *Vaisakha?*

Students: [*in unison*] May!

One boy, Yogesha, says 'April!' again.

Anitha: [*to Yogesha*] What do you do? Just simply come and sit in class not learning anything?

The question-answers continue about the order of months, and which seasons they correspond to, before it leads into a discussion about clothes…

In this episode, Anitha was working with the whole-group discussion approach suggested by the *LC* program. The pedagogic interaction began by eliciting children's own experiences of their morning activities. In one sense, this interaction indicates a weakened classification of school knowledge – students' own experiences could be counted as legitimate, by contrast with previous systems in which children's experiential knowledge was absent from pedagogic exchanges. However, not all contributions from students were validated by Anitha, and the criteria for acceptable responses were not made explicit to students. Anitha would elaborate questions to eventually elicit the 'correct' answer, even if students were offering responses based on their own experiences.

Child-centred pedagogies like *LC* emphasise the presence of student achievement rather than the absence or lack of it. Generally, Anitha gave positive feedback to students ('yes', 'good') to highlight their achievements. However, in the last part of the episode above, Anitha reprimanded Yogesha in a way that emphasised the absence of his achievement. In cases like these, students learn that an incorrect answer has negative consequences and that their teacher has explicit control over the learning interaction.

Some students in Anitha's class were able to have an individual voice during pedagogic interactions. Indeed, the type of classroom talk was noticeably different to what was observed in Mallige HPS. In Savitha's class at Mallige, student responses tended to be collective or in unison, but in Kamala HPS, there seemed to be space for individual expression. Of course, not all students contributed equally during discussions, so some voices remained unheard during such exchanges. But in the cases of those who did speak, Anitha would have come to learn more about their individual differences – a key interest of child-centred pedagogies, which stress the uniqueness of each child.

Because Anitha controlled the discussions, they were not necessarily of an open nature. For example, with strong framing over the content, sequence, and pace of interaction, Anitha directed the topic quite suddenly from clothes to seasons. The link between these topics was not immediately clear to students, though it became more apparent as the lesson continued.

Anitha: And what season starts after November? Karthika?

Karthika: Winter season.

Anitha: Yes, winter season. [*expressively enacting feeling cold*] When we feel it is coooold and we just want to stay at home! [*laughter from students*] And what months are the winter months? Starting after November, what comes next?

S1: December!

Anitha: Good! What month?

(continued)

(continued)

Students: [*in unison*] December!
Anitha: Okay, so in summer months what kind of clothes do we wear? [*silence and shifting about among students*] Do we wear sweaters in summer?
Students: [*in unison*] No!
Anitha: Why?
S1, S2: Because it is too hot. Because there is too much sunshine.
Anitha: Yes, and we will get too hot, sweat too much, and it is not good for health. So what kind of clothes do we wear?
[*Silence.*]
Anitha: [*touching the skirt of the girl sitting next to her*] What is this material? Do you remember?
S1: Cotton!
Anitha: Good! We wear cotton so it is cool for us. What about for rainy season? What do we wear? [*silence*] Madhu, what do you wear?
Madhu: [*pauses, then meekly*] Cotton…?
Anitha: In the rain, you need a *coat* [said in English]. You need a –
Students: [*in unison*] coat!
Anitha: Good! And an umbrella…What about for winter season, when you feel 'oh brrrr! It is so cold!'?
Karthik: A sweater!
Anitha: Good! Sweater, hat, all those things to keep you warm. These are *woollen items* [said in English]. They are –
Students: [*in unison*] woollen items!

In this episode, Anitha attempted to engage her students by taking a lively tone, giving positive feedback and having a close interaction with them. The teacher's disposition towards creating a responsive atmosphere was central to this kind of *LC* pedagogic encounter. The authority relation between the teacher and students is one that is built around fear in many Indian classrooms. But this was challenged through the discussion model, symbolised most clearly by Anitha sitting alongside children on the floor to conduct the interaction. A weakened control over the pedagogic interaction was also indicated by open ended questions ('why?', 'what clothes do we wear?'), though the silences of students suggested they did not always know the expected answers to these questions. Once again, the weakened framing of the pedagogic interaction rendered the evaluative criteria hidden to students.

The wide-ranging topics covered during the discussion, from clothes and seasons to the names of the months in both the Indian and western calendars, suggest that there were weak subject boundaries in the interaction. The content, sequence, and pace of questions remained controlled by Anitha. Sometimes, the content of the discussion was unfamiliar to the children. Anitha seemed to struggle to elicit from students the answer of ‘coat’ (in English) as a type of wet-weather apparel. This kind of clothing and especially its name in English was not common in Kamala village. Without their own experiences of ‘coats’ to draw from, children were expected to assimilate the knowledge (that a coat is wet-weather apparel) and interestingly this was when the pedagogic interaction turned to repetition in unison.

Anitha: And where do we get these items from?
Kavya: From the shop! Miss! My father went to the shops and bought me a skirt!
Anitha: Good! See, there are skirts. What other types of clothes are there?
S1, S2, S3: Churidar! Jeans-pant [said in English]! Sari!
Anitha: Okay – and if you went to buy material for making clothes, how much would you need?
Kavya: Two! One for me and one for my sister.
Anitha: [*laughs*] Okay. But how much material do you need? For one shirt, we need one metre of cloth.

Anitha gets up from the floor and goes to the chalkboard to write ‘1 m’.

Anitha: Okay, so for one metre of cloth, how many centimetres? [*Silence.*]
Anitha: [*writing ‘1,000 cm’ on the board*] There are one thousand.
Students: [*in unison*] One thousand!
Anitha: So for half a metre, how many centimetres? [*writing ‘½m = 500 cm’ on the board*] Five hundred.
Students: [*in unison*] Five hundred!

Anitha realises her conversion error.

Anitha: Oh, this is wrong. Children, in one metre there are one hundred centimetres. [*adjusts the figures on the board*] So half a metre is fifty centimetres. Half a metre is –
Students: [*in unison*] fifty centimetres!

Anitha writes on the board ‘¼m = 25 cm, ¾m = 75 cm’ while the children look on. She then tells Lakshmi to stand up and asks her how many centimetres there are in half a metre. Lakshmi doesn’t know, and shifts quietly as she stands. Her eyes are on the board, trying to make sense of what her teacher has written. Anitha tells her to sit down, and searches for some coins in her purse to take another approach to the lesson.

In this interaction, some students were allowed to make independent contributions to discussions. However, the exchange was by and large controlled by the teacher – students did not ask questions or direct the content, sequence, or pace of the discussion. Only Kavya, the class leader who was described by Anitha as a ‘brilliant’ student, was able to individually voice an experience that was not a direct answer to a question. Indeed, in this episode, Kavya contributed more often to the discussion than other students. She was seen by her teacher as a successful student and was active and confident in the classroom environment. The discussion model seemed to encourage participation from students who were confident enough to contribute and who received validation from the teacher regarding their academic abilities. This kind of pedagogic interaction relayed to students the message that a confident personality was particularly valued by the teacher.

The strong framing over the selection, sequence, and pace of knowledge was illustrated during this episode by Anitha's somewhat sudden introduction of mathematical concepts relating to measurement. This appeared to cause some difficulties as the rapid change in subject matter meant that Anitha did not build up to, or scaffold, the knowledge she required students to acquire. Thus, the interaction became rote-based as students were led to repeat in unison (incorrect) unit conversions.

Realising that the children did not understand the concept of unit conversion, Anitha decides to convey the knowledge in a different way. She stands with some coins in her hand.

Anitha: How much if we have fifty paise and twenty five paise? Seventy five paise. So, one meter is like one rupee. There are fifty centimetres in half a metre.

The children seem, like me, to be a little confused. Anitha responds by changing approach again.

Anitha: So if we have '1 m = 100 cm' [*writing it on the board*], how many centimetres do we have for two metres?

There is silence from the students. Anitha tries to write up her question more clearly:

$$\begin{array}{rl} & 100\text{ cm} \\ + & \underline{100\text{ cm}} \end{array}$$

Karthika: Two hundred!

Anitha: Good. Now if we have one and a half metres, how many centimetres? [*silence*] Okay, see, [*writing on the board as she speaks*] one metre is one hundred centimetres. What is half a metre?

Karthika: [*looking at the board at the previously written equations*] Fifty!

Anitha: Okay, now do the calculation.

She writes the question and answer on the board.

$$\begin{array}{rll} & 1\text{ m} & 100\text{ cm} \\ + & \underline{\tfrac{1}{2}\text{ m}} & \underline{50\text{ cm}} \\ & 1\tfrac{1}{2}\text{ m} & 150\text{ cm} \end{array}$$

It is 11.35 a.m., and abruptly, Anitha tells the children to have their recess break. The students file out of the classroom to go to the toilet.

In this section of the lesson, Anitha attempted to elicit the correct answer from students using a number of strategies. She did not return to the repetition of information in unison and instead tried to present the concepts in different ways. However, the pace and sequence in which she developed this lesson did not appear to be appropriate, as most students did not seem able to follow her. The abrupt end to the lesson may have been a result of not knowing what to do given the difficulties she had faced in conveying the concepts. While the children were outside for the recess break, I asked Anitha why the children found it difficult. She explained that they did not yet know what a metre signified, or what fractions were, but that she nevertheless gave the lesson.

> just to touch the children's minds. Mainly this lesson is about clothes for the season. The maths was just to touch their minds. They know a little bit like fifty paise and fifty paise is one rupee. That's all.

This lesson, and Anitha's justification of it, reveals some difficulties of integrating mathematics into a thematic syllabus under the *LC* program. Many teachers expressed the kinds of difficulties that Anitha explained in an interview with me.

> We haven't gone deeply into maths. We are not able to go in depth into the content and the topics. We can reach up to fractions and decimals. But next…if you ask any *LC* teacher, everybody says 'there is no maths, we aren't able to do maths'. They are struggling. They are thinking, 'how to do it? Where mix it?' They aren't able to know. (Anitha *LC* K1)

Anitha's attempt to integrate mathematics into the lesson, as required by the *LC* model, did not take on the linear approach for teaching mathematical knowledge which had been recommended by the national syllabus. While there may be merits in integrating knowledge, in this lesson, the teaching of mathematical concepts was confused and rushed. In this case, Anitha seemed to see the *LC* integrated curriculum as enabling a breadth of topics to be 'touched' on in one lesson but not necessarily as being conducive to delving deeper into subject areas.

After 5 min, at about 11.40 a.m., the children return to the classroom from their recess break. Anitha tells them to sit in their groups (*LC* 'learning groups') and gives each of the four groups a piece of lined paper. The students talk quietly while Anitha writes five questions on the blackboard. She then reads each question aloud, and the class repeats in unison. Anitha allocates each group one question to discuss and write answers to, and tells them that all groups must write answers to question five.

The questions are:

1. How many seasons are there and what are their names?
2. In summer, what types of clothes do you wear?
3. In the rainy season, what types of clothes do you wear?
4. In winter season, what types of clothes do you wear?
5. Write the names of different clothing items.

(continued)

(continued)

Anitha sits at her desk. The lead student in each group begins copying their question onto the piece of paper. The others look on. Nirmala, a standard 7 teacher and good friend of Anitha, comes by the window for a chat. Anitha leaves the classroom to talk to Nirmala while the children are left to work. It takes the lead student in each group a lot of time to copy the two questions onto the sheet of paper. I observe very little discussion occurring in the groups.

Anitha has been absent from the classroom for about an hour. She returns just before lunchtime at 1.00 p.m. to tell them to go for food and instructs them to come back to work on the questions after lunch. I look at the pieces of paper. Most groups have only copied down the questions.

After lunch, Anitha returns to the classroom to instruct the students to finish the questions. She leaves after 5 min, telling me she has some things to do. The children, left without their teacher, begin to talk and play. They remain unsupervised until the end of the school day. Anitha returns briefly before 4.00 p.m. to pack up her belongings and close up the classroom.

This episode began with Anitha setting up the *LC* small-group collaborative discussion task. The task expected students to take a significant amount of control over the pedagogic interaction, as discussions and written output were to be conducted by students within each group. It demanded a high level of communication and co-operation skills. Students were organised into mixed groups in terms of achievement but also in terms of gender and caste. While I was observing the lesson, Anitha pointed out to me that the groups were socially mixed, explaining that 'see, the groups are caste mixed. We don't do like that [caste differentiation] here'. When I had a chance to speak with her the next day, I asked Anitha to elaborate on her approach to student-grouping. She explained that she tried to get a mixture of student 'levels' in each group and also kept in mind students' friendship circles so that they would be happy to discuss together.

In this sense, there was some consideration of children's affective needs on the part of the teacher. This might indicate that the stratification of students according to achievement was less explicit in Anitha's classroom than as was observed in the *Nali Kali* model of grouping at Mallige HPS. However, Anitha also explained that the 'leaders' of each group, who were allocated the task of writing, were all 'brilliant' students. So, like in Mallige HPS, learner ability did differentiate students explicitly in Anitha's classroom. In the *LC* approach, teachers were asked to classify students as 'dependent', 'interested', 'engaged', and 'independent' learners. The evaluative discourse shifted from the rate of knowledge acquisition ('slow' and 'fast' in *Nali Kali*) to children's *character* in relation to learning, including students' confidence to discuss or disposition towards being 'interested' and 'engaged'. The expanded evaluative criteria in the *LC* model, which now took into account the character of learners, made less explicit the classification of ability and the boundaries between students, yet Anitha continued to draw on language such as 'brilliant', 'fast', 'slow', and 'dull' to describe her students, such that the differentiation of ability continued to be explicit and not always reflective of the *LC* ideals.

In the episode above, it became clear that greater input, support, and monitoring from the teacher were required to help students complete the collaborative discussion-based task. Anitha was absent from the classroom for a significant amount of time, and the *LC* ideals of a discussion-based pedagogy, which relied on the teacher to be a 'facilitator', were significantly compromised. However, for Anitha, the discourse of the *LC* reform emphasised the capabilities of her students, as she explained in an interview.

> *LC* has shown us that children have the power to think. They are knowing many things. (Anitha *LC* K1)

Here, Anitha recognises her rural students *as learners*, challenging the deficit assumptions of the 'uneducated' and uneducable villager (see Chapter 6). With the abilities of children recognised, the teacher is able to hand over greater control of learning processes to students, for instance setting tasks like small-group discussions. According to Bernstein, the framing (or teacher-control) over pedagogic interaction is thereby weakened. However, the weakening of pedagogic control was taken to an extreme by Anitha who, in her long absence, left her students to their own devices. The teacher's absence impacted upon the success of the learning activity. Students were provided with little scaffolding in their attempt to complete the task, and the intention to promote dialogic interaction between students was left unrealised. (A similar situation was described in Chapter 8, wherein Savitha from Mallige HPS left her standard 2 students for long periods.)

When I asked Anitha why so many teachers were observably absent from their classrooms, she replied:

> It is just the way it has come [developed]. That is the way we are going, what can we do? And this…they cannot blame us…why because, this is in the HM's [Headmaster's] hands. He should have complete hold on teachers. He should tell, 'first go to class, do the work that has been given to you, and *then* you can talk [with your colleagues]'. When there is no strictness…when the HM is not strict, the teacher will not be alert. (Anitha *LC* K1)

During my time at Kamala HPS, Anitha openly expressed the tensions between the head teacher and staff, which had significantly impacted teacher motivation in the school. The comment above reveals a possible pitfall in expecting teachers to be 'facilitators' (requiring a high level of interaction in the classroom) in a school context in which staff attendance, motivation, and cohesion are problematic.

The *LC* ideals of democratic and collaborative student participation were not quite realised in Anitha's lesson. During the group task, most children did not contribute verbally or in writing during the task. Children identified as successful learners (high achievers) were given a greater opportunity to be active, and the lack of discussion meant that a majority of the students remained passive in the pedagogic interaction. Recognising that students had not completed the written task of the lesson, Anitha told me at the end of the day, ‘tomorrow I will finish the lesson – they haven’t understood properly and they are not writing much, so we will have to discuss again’.

In this episode of the *LC* pedagogy in action, the weak framing over pedagogic interaction in the group task placed significant demands on students to facilitate their own learning. The communication skills of these young learners were vital to the success of the activity. Anitha’s absence from the classroom meant that students received little support in the task, and students were then unclear about what was expected of them. The following section draws together some of the findings of this account to comment on the pedagogic messages conveyed to students through Anitha’s *LC* practice.

9.3 Pedagogic Messages

In this chapter, I have analysed one lesson in which the *LC* pedagogy was interpreted and practised by Anitha for her standard 2 learners. We saw how the framing over pedagogic interaction was weakened during the whole-group discussion, meaning that children were given the option to contribute answers to open-ended questions. This device enabled the validation of the individual student voice in the classroom – uncommon in many Indian schools. However, in this lesson, questions were only asked by the teacher, which maintained a degree of teacher-control over the content, sequence, and pace of the discussion. Discussions were not dialogic, but directed mainly by the teacher.

Anitha’s reshaping of the *LC* model did involve the loosening of some boundaries. The hierarchy of valued knowledge was weakened through the validation of children’s own experiences. With the expansion of the types of knowledge that now had a place in the classroom, there was a lack of clarity about the criteria for the ‘correct’ response to the teacher’s questioning. A number of open-ended questions set by the teacher were followed by silence from the children, indicating uncertainty over the expected response. In such situations, questions continued to be framed by Anitha until an accepted response was provided by students. The classification of valid knowledge (the ‘correct’ answer) remained strong, but it was now less explicit to students. Indeed, students were expected to navigate their way to a correct response, though the criteria for this response were largely implicit and seemed to be known only to Anitha. Anitha provided positive feedback to most children’s responses, and these ‘good’ responses were used to build towards the expected answer to her question.

The communication skills and confidence of the child to respond to Anitha’s elicitation were tested in this interaction. The message conveyed to the standard 2 students was that active participation in whole-group discussions was valued, as long as responses to questions made sense to the teacher. In this way, students’ ability to read the teacher and infer the expected response was also tested: The teacher’s personality became highly central to the success of the knowledge relay. Interestingly, the pedagogic interaction became more strongly framed (overtly teacher-directed) when students were presented with information that was unfamiliar to them.

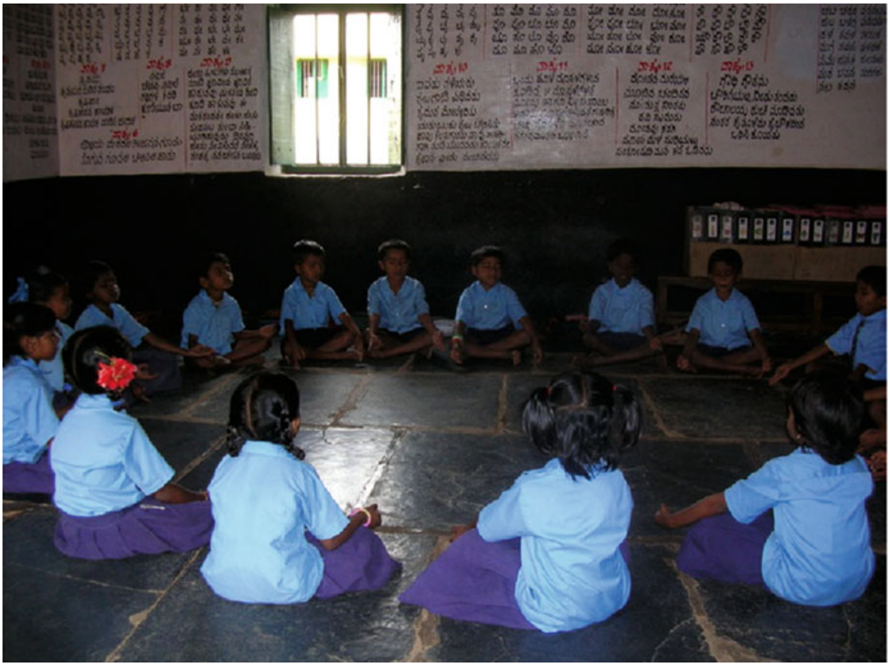
In these cases, when knowledge was required to be assimilated, there was a return to a strongly framed rote-based approach in which students repeated terms in unison. When this happened, the classification of knowledge became explicit to students.

During the lesson, children were observed to learn that their experiences and emotions were, to some degree, relevant to the classroom interaction. This went beyond the singing ritual at the start of the lesson to become apparent in the whole-group discussion, during which a lively and friendly tone was used. Children's affect and experiences seemed to be explicitly part of the learning process rather than being set outside the process of 'real' learning as in Savitha's practice of the *Nali Kali* model. The communication skills of students were much more relevant to the acquisition of school knowledge than in Savitha's classroom in Mallige HPS, resulting in the stratification of students by communication skills and confidence. In the small-group task, while groups were mixed in terms of gender, caste, and perceived ability, student stratification was explicit in that leaders were chosen for each group. The message relayed to students was that an achievement code remained strong within the classroom – but that it did not always privilege written skills, given the centrality of oral communication in determining children's success in the lesson.

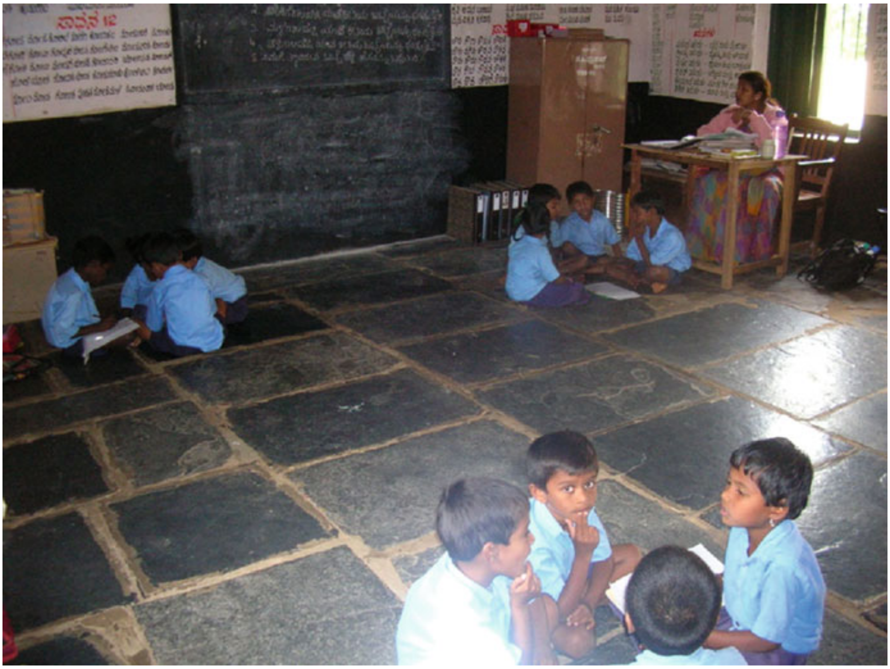
While the teacher–student hierarchy was in some ways challenged through the whole-group discussion (most notably by the teacher sitting with the children on the floor to conduct the interaction), Anitha also maintained her authority and control over the content, sequence, and pace of discussions. The ritual of the *shloka* recitation affirmed the discipline and respect expected of students for this authority. The meditation ritual also conveyed messages of disciplined behaviour to students and again derived from a religious frame. In these ways, the democratic ideals of the *LC* pedagogy were worked through a social ordering that has, in the past, been used to validate a strongly framed, disciplined pedagogy.

A significant message from the *LC* pedagogy to the teacher was that students were capable of co-constructing knowledge that was valued in school. This re-positioning of students challenged the deficit discourses surrounding the rural child, which had previously shaped the interface between the home and the school. However, the explicit aim of the *LC* program for teachers to be active facilitators and maintain input into learning processes was not always observed, given the problematic dynamics of teacher motivation, support, and monitoring in the school. The lesson in question had the potential to play out very differently had Anitha not been absent from the classroom. This was, unfortunately, a typical lesson. In other lessons I observed, Anitha did not tend to scaffold, facilitate, or even monitor the small-group writing tasks which she had set students to do. She was quite often out of the classroom or at her desk completing administrative work while her students navigated the tasks with little support. With the evaluative criteria of the tasks being largely opaque to students, without teacher facilitation, the small-group 'discussions' failed to encourage collaborative, dialogic pedagogic interactions.

Kamala HPS



Morning meditation. Std 2, Kamala HPS



Learning groups. Std 2, Kamala HPS

Std 2, Kamala HPS

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Chapter 10
Child-Centred Pedagogies and the Promise of Democratic Schooling

This book began by asking why child-centred pedagogy has become so strongly associated with improving the quality of education for the poor. My inquiry has been motivated by the tendency of education policy to view particular types of teaching and learning as neutral factors or acontextual truths in achieving education 'development'. The intention of this book is to demonstrate that pedagogy and pedagogic reform are, in fact, contested social and political processes. Education reforms create a normative imaginary of schooling the state's young people, but the enactments of reform do not always take linear or singular trajectories. Pedagogic practices are assembled through complex negotiations of ideas by multiple actors over time and space; they are constantly, to use Bernstein's term, recontextualised. In the rural Indian context, child-centred reforms have attempted to cement new authority relations between teachers and students, and redefine what constitutes legitimate and apposite knowledge. As the analysis in this book has shown, Indian reform programs are recontextualised through existing social and pedagogic practices and through the material reality of rural schooling, and in this process, their intentions can shift. The relationship, then, between child-centred education and education development is one that cannot be taken for granted as being straightforward.

In this concluding chapter, I draw together three threads from my analysis. First, I discuss how Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation can help bring to light the translations and transformations of pedagogic ideals as they move through national and state policy arenas, as well as through schools and classrooms settings. I suggest that policy recontextualisation opens up a space for rethinking the processes and outcomes of education reform in development contexts.[1] Second, I reflect on what it means to be educated in the rural Indian schools discussed in this book.

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[1] The account of policy recontextualisation in this chapter has been especially influenced by the theoretical perspectives offered by Stephen Ball in his body of work on critical policy studies (cf. Ball 1997, 2006; Ball et al. 2011).

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What kind of people does child-centred education seek to create? The discussion considers how the democratic intentions of child-centred education produces new, challenging subject positions for learners, and explores how these subject positions are aligned to narratives of modernisation and development in India. I then set out the implications of my analysis for ‘quality’ education reform in development contexts. I make explicit some of the costs of child-centred education in Indian government schools in order to highlight the social and material investments that reformers need to make. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the overall project of ‘quality’ improvement as a social and political endeavour, rather than, as it is predominantly constructed in development discourses, as a context-free intervention.

10.1 The Recontextualisation of Child-Centred Education in India

Policy pronouncements tend to smooth over the complexity and tensions of educational reform processes. By following the travels of pedagogic ideas in macro-level policy framings and micro-level practices, the analysis in this book has attempted to disrupt the dominant view of policy as necessarily rational and coherent. Bernstein’s concept of recontextualisation helps recover the temporal and spatial dimensions in policy analysis; in this study, it was used to reveal the social and political shapings of child-centred education in the Indian context. Recontextualisation foregrounds the relational nature of social change – how new relations are contextualised and come to be assembled or sedimented through social practices. The movement, reworking, and transformation of ideas is captured by the concept of recontextualisation, and when applied to policy studies, it illuminates even the most ‘groundbreaking’ of reforms as a series of small, connected, and sometimes contradictory moves. In this study, the idea of recontextualisation prompted me to examine how some pedagogic discourses and practices can gain traction over others, beyond a broad teacher-centred/learner-centred dichotomy. In this frame, questions about the success of policy ‘implementation’ are questions about the *durability* of some social practices over others in specific contexts.

The analyses presented in this book have shown how child-centred education has been utilised in, and shaped by, a number of overlapping political agendas in India. At the national level, child-centred education was linked to the modernisation of the mass education system after India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947. In the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, and in subsequent development programs throughout the 1990s, child-centred ideas about freedom and joy in learning were used to address more explicitly the state’s concerns about social equality and democratic participation in educational processes. In the National Curriculum Framework of 2000, the democratic intent of child-centred education was recontextualised through religious moralism and nationalistic discourses to support the political objectives of a newly elected Hindu-nationalist government.

Surviving another political change which led to the current iteration of India's National Curriculum Framework in 2005, child-centred education was re-secularised, and its association with constructivist learning theories was made more explicit. At the state level too, multiple state and non-state actors influenced the construction of pedagogic ideals. In Karnataka, the predominant interest of these actors concerned the advancement of the state's economic growth and social modernisation, specifically its status as a global technological centre.

Policies promoting child-centred education in India do not act alone and are better thought of as an ensemble of multiple ideas that both shape and are shaped by the contexts in which they work. Discussions in this book have showed how two models of child-centred pedagogy introduced in rural Karnataka schools, *Nali Kali* and *LC,* recontextualised notions of active, participatory learning by attempting in different ways and to different extents to loosen the teacher's control over the pedagogic relay. Ideals of participatory schooling were reshaped by teachers in relation to other policies and discourses acting upon school contexts. Alongside the democratic discourses on learning and the language of 'joyful' education, policy statements explicitly emphasised performance-oriented educational discourses as a presupposition for economic and national growth. This meant that teachers implementing child-centred programs in Kamala and Mallige schools had to negotiate program ideals for greater learning freedoms in a context in which school outcomes were determined by a tightly structured national syllabus and standardised assessment practices.

The perspective encouraged by policy recontextualisation is one that tries to understand the unintended and unanticipated social and material effects of policy processes. This perspective is especially important in the context of development reform which has been largely driven by the quantification of quality, wherein school practices are measured against broad targets for school outcomes, focused mainly on student attendance, retention, and academic achievement. Looking more closely at the micro-practices of schooling, however, reveals struggles over what constitutes good teaching in reform contexts. In policy documents, programs are often assumed to be implemented in 'ideal' schools which are filled with 'ideal' learners and teachers. In reality, of course, education policies are enacted in complex contexts and are shaped by (for example) school histories, geographies, cultures, teacher and student subjectivities, material resources, physical infrastructure, bureaucratic support and pressures, and other policy mandates.

Thus, to consider policy as a process of recontextualisation is to recognise that the success or failure of educational programs cannot be attributed to the success or failure of individuals alone. The implementation of a program is shaped by the collective, relational interpretations and practices of multiple actors in reform contexts. For example, the significant teacher absenteeism in Mallige and Kamala schools which significantly compromised the goals of the *Nali Kali* and *LC* programs needs to be understood in relation to the institutional and material contexts of teachers' work. As discussed in Chapter 5, the teachers in this study were working in a highly regulated context in which their own pedagogic and professional autonomy was relatively weak. Some teachers expressed frustration, others a lack of personal confidence with regard to the demands placed on them by the reform programs. Others described their fatigue with the numerous, and often fleeting classroom programs they were expected to deliver. Teachers were charged with the task of implementing the new pedagogic models, but I observed no significant attempt to trouble the wider cultures and pedagogic frameworks in schools. One of the unintended effects of the emphasis on 'independent learning' in the child-centred programs was its recontextualisation by teachers as legitimising their reduced participation in (and, indeed, absence from) learning activities. My analysis of policy recontextualisation thus brings to light how pedagogic practices like these rural Indian ones come to be: how multiple pedagogic ideas can be translated, assembled, and transformed in local contexts of practice.

10.2 New Learner Subjects?

Through the processes of policy recontextualisation, ideals and expectations relating to the manner and disposition of students and teachers are circulated and established in schools. Bernstein's theory of pedagogy seeks to make visible the social messages relayed through pedagogic interaction, messages whose circulation produces normative subject-positions for learners and teachers. The participatory, non-hierarchical learning ideals of child-centred pedagogies are conducive to development agendas seeking to expand and democratise school participation for the poor. National and state policy discourses also conceive mass education in India in terms of producing a skilled labour force, and also (increasingly) in terms of global economic competitiveness and technological advancement. The interests and demands of the growing urban middle class shape how the rural poor are educated. But what kind of citizen-subject can mass education seek to create for such a vast, diverse, and inequitable (and democratic) state undergoing significant social and economic transformation?

In this chapter, I reflect on the subject-positions produced in the reform contexts of rural Karnataka. The book's focus on the dynamics of control in rural classrooms sheds light on the contested authority relations between students and teachers, as well as between students and school-knowledge. The child-centred reforms examined in this study constructed the child as an individualised, self-regulating, independent, creative, and active learner. The normative subject-position of the learner was at the same time strongly shaped by discourses of competition, performance, and discipline, which were variously circulated through state-controlled syllabi, testing mechanisms, and socio-historical predications of Indian schooling. The former construction of the individualised child relies on loosening the control of knowledge transaction, whereby students are able to explore, discuss, and co-construct knowledge in a socially participatory environment. The latter emphasis on performance and discipline involves the tightly framed inputs and externally managed outcomes of a schooling process. The production of the learner-subject in these Karnataka schools was thus multifarious and contested, and their teachers' recontextualised practices exemplified some tensions that may arise in such a context.

The following discussion draws on Bernstein's theorisation of 'pedagogic identities' to explore how new learner-subjects are formed through the social and political orientations of Indian state schooling. The discussion is suggestive rather than conclusive – it intends to open a space for thinking further about the production of citizen-subjects in India in relation to changing ideals of rural schooling and the possibilities for transforming the lives of the poor.

10.2.1 Social Messages, Pedagogic Identities

In his later work, Bernstein (2000) began to theorise the production of what he called 'pedagogic identities' in educational processes. He suggested that subject positions for teachers and students were produced by the social and political motivations and practices of school reform.

> The bias and focus, which inheres in different modalities of reform, constructs different pedagogic identities…Thus the bias and focus of this official discourse are expected to construct in teachers and students a moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices. (Bernstein 2000:65)

In this view, students' and teachers' subjectivities are both performed in school and produced by the social messages of schooling. Bernstein identified four normative orientations (the 'bias and focus') of the pedagogic identities that schooling projected for teachers and students: retrospective, prospective, therapeutic, and market-oriented.

The 'retrospective' orientation is concerned with maintaining the cultural, religious, and/or nationalistic grand narratives of the past, and seeks to project such discourses into the future through schooling. Drivers of this orientation (often the state) seek to secure tight controls over the discursive inputs of education (for example, claiming an explicit authority over knowledge selection in the curriculum and its pedagogic transaction). In the Indian context, national curriculum reforms in 2000 explicitly promoted a Hindu revivalist agenda and sought to recover earlier models of moralistic education (as discussed in Chapter 3). The pedagogic identity of the teacher was to take on a retrospective orientation: she was to be a preserver of values, history, and tradition; she was to exercise her moral authority as a *guru*, patron, martyr, and patriot. The learner in this relationship was to be a disciplined receiver of knowledge.

According to Bernstein, the 'prospective' orientation to schooling is motivated by educational performance and underscores its economic exchange value. A prospective educational project is one which attempts to deal with cultural, economic, and technological change. It recontextualises selective social features of the past to defend or raise the state's economic performance. Often, a prospective orientation involves strong state controls over both the inputs and outputs of education. It constructs education in instrumental terms, with teachers and students as the nation's human capital. As discussions in Chapters 3 and 4 have illustrated, India's national education policies and programs for development were shaped by such instrumentalist discourses. Teachers were positioned as functionaries who were to deliver state development ideals, and students were positioned as fulfilling those goals through the acquisition of school-knowledge.

Bernstein understood these retrospective and prospective orientations to schooling as 'centred' in that they were often driven and managed by the state, through, for example, national policies and curricula. He also suggested that schooling could produce 'de-centred' pedagogic identities which are shaped by external interests, such as the market. While centred orientations foreground the state as an educational project, de-centred orientations take the individual self as the primary project of education. Bernstein described a de-centred 'market' identity as responding to market needs and contingencies external to schools, such that schooling 'arises to produce an identity whose production has an exchange value in a market' (2000:69). In effect, the prospect of a globally marketable student has resulted in a growing emphasis on technology and English language instruction in rural Karnataka. This state's implementation of standardised student assessments is another example of the local recontextualisation of global market-oriented discourses of student performance and accountability (see also Mukhopadhyay and Sriprakash 2011).

The fourth orientation that Bernstein conceptualised was a de-centred 'therapeutic' identity 'orientated to autonomous, non-specialised, flexible thinking, and socially to team work as an active participant' (Bernstein 2000:68). Unlike a prospective focus, a therapeutic identity has less clear links with economic agendas, and its outputs are difficult to measure.

> I call the identity 'therapeutic' because this identity is produced by complex theories of personal, cognitive and social development, often labelled progressive. *These theories are the means of a control invisible to the student*. (Bernstein 2000:68, emphasis added)

Seeking in the name of greater learning freedom to make invisible the controls over student learning, progressive pedagogies like the child-centred models examined in this book tend to have a therapeutic orientation. Constructed as a 'facilitator', the *Nali Kali* or the *LC* teacher is expected to be personable, communicative, and reflective. The learner-subject is constructed by reform ideals as joyful, active, and independent. In this orientation,

> the concept of self is crucial and the self is regarded as a personal project. It is an internally regulated construction and relatively independent of external consumer signifiers. It is a truly symbolic construction. (Bernstein 2000:73)

Bernstein's schema of pedagogic identities includes the possibility of opposition and collaboration between its four broad orientations: schooling can be multiply oriented, shaped by multiple interests. The production of subject-positions through these orientations is what Bernstein understood as the politics of recontextualisation. The present study reveals how a number of teachers perceived their role as one of moral authority over their students. The retrospective orientation of schooling (as imparting moral discipline) was strengthened through discourses of caste and class, particularly relating to the perceived 'uneducated' backgrounds of rural communities. At the same time, teachers described themselves as government employees delivering state mandates as parties to a 'prospective' position oriented towards national, social, and economic development. They explained how a 'good' student was expected to demonstrate a 'fast' assimilation of knowledge – their emphasis on controlled inputs and outputs of learning performance resonating with a prospective pedagogic orientation.

Alongside these prospectively oriented statements, teachers also discussed how they negotiated the new therapeutic ideals of the child-centred reforms. Their projections of therapeutic identities often depended on resources that were de-centred (external to the state) and largely symbolic. The facilitation of a dialogic interaction, for instance, relies on the disposition and skills of the individual teacher. The durability of the therapeutic project, and its ability to produce therapeutic subject-positions, is likely to be weakened as it is recontextualised through retrospective, prospective, or market-oriented frames. Bernstein (2000:56) argued that 'a therapeutic mode may be inserted in an economic mode, retaining its original name and resonances, whilst giving rise to opposing practice'. Indeed, the current study has showed how performance-oriented and moral discourses (which legitimised the maintenance of tight controls over learning interactions) were strengthened by teachers' deficit constructions of rural students as uneducated and uncivilised. As a result, primary schooling in Mallige and Kamala produced learner-subjects who were simultaneously 'uneducated', 'joyful', and 'communicative'.

The predominance of deficit discourses in Karnataka schools, which constructed the rural child as uneducated and uncivilised, presented a significant challenge to the therapeutic project of child-centred education. In the main, the recontextualisation of child-centred programs in Karnataka failed to displace the deficit discourses of rural learners. For example, the social distance between teachers and students was maintained despite teachers' interpretations of teaching 'with love'. As another example, some teachers doubted the possibility of their young learners contributing legitimate or apposite knowledge to classroom dialogue given students' lack of experience outside their rural contexts. The *Nali Kali* and *LC* programs were targeted only at rural government schools in Karnataka, and specifically at students in the early years of schooling. Thus, these programs emerged as a compensatory strategy – a project for the rural, poor, 'uneducated', and very young child. Some teachers specifically understood activity-based learning as a pedagogic strategy for the 'dull' child. Compensatory educational programs proceed on deficit models of learners (cf. Connell 1994; Bernstein 1973) and can reinforce patterns which produce inequality.

Indeed, the new 'freedoms' sought by child-centred education are somewhat of an imposition for the rural child who needs to meet new demands to be a successful learner, demands which do not explicitly address, much less overcome, the uneven distribution of educational resources and persisting social inequalities in Indian society. Rural children, who are often first-generation school participants, are not likely to have the same access to social resources to help them navigate school expectations as their urban, middle class counterparts. Yet, with the 'self as project', they are expected to be responsible for their learning and become independent learners. While child-centred education, through the language of democratic, inclusive, and participatory learning, may intend to challenge social hierarchies, critics like Sharp and Green (1975:227) have argued that the focus on the individual instead represents an 'emotional turning away from society'. This therapeutic turn individualises students' success or failure in school, leaving the relations and contexts which produce social hierarchies and inequality unacknowledged and unchallenged.

As the middle classes star in India's narratives of modernisation, global competitiveness, and economic optimism, the future for rural learners is left uncertain.

Questioning the viability of the individualised learner-subject in contexts of rural schooling, teachers in Kamala and Mallige schools pulled back to strong controls over the transmission of knowledge. This recontextualisation of child-centred ideas occurred in light of the socio-material conditions of rural schooling: large class sizes, unsupportive bureaucracies and performance pressures for teachers and students (standardised testing, a fixed monthly syllabus, grade-based promotion, and textbook-based instruction at the higher grades). The observational analyses in Chapters 8 and 9 revealed that despite the reforms' intentions to foster more democratic learning environments, students and especially the 'dull' learner had very limited control over their learning in the classroom. Evaluative criteria remained strongly framed by the teacher, and the labels these criteria produced and/or reinforced (like 'brilliant' or 'fast') stratified students by arguably narrow indicators of performance. Messages of social and educational hierarchy were therefore relayed to children, despite the promise of democratic learning relations.

As Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008:203) observed in their study of progressive education reforms in sub-Saharan Africa, '[pedagogic] ideas are recontextualised and displaced, unable in the majority of instances to meet the social development goals demanded of them'. The analyses in this book suggest that dismantling the deficit model of the rural learner is key to realising the social equity goals of child-centred reforms. How, then, in the social and educational contexts of rural Karnataka, can child-centred ideals be recontextualised in ways that support their democratic goals and intentions for social equity? In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the urgent need for educational reformers to consider more carefully the social and material conditions required to meet the social development goals of child-centred education. Without this precise consideration of social context, the newly promoted subject-position of the self-responsible, independent learner – idealised for a growing, globalising India – represents a turning away from the most marginalised citizens of the country. These are young citizens who have unequal access to the resources that support, in often invisible ways, the therapeutic and market-oriented ideals of schooling. Without due attention to these resources, progressive pedagogies can hardly be imagined as transformative for the rural poor.

10.3 Lessons for Development

Through its analysis of child-centred pedagogic recontextualisation, this book has highlighted the significant demands made of Karnataka primary teachers and the difficult conditions in which these demands were to be realised. In doing so, it has exposed the complexity of these and other teachers' work and pedagogic practice. Bernstein suggested that competence models of pedagogy (such as the *Nali Kali* and *LC* models) have an elaborate theoretical base in terms of personal, social, and cognitive learning theories. These models arguably require methods of enabling and supporting the teacher to construct meaning from these theoretical ideas in her classroom. Competence pedagogic models tend to have a number of costs in terms of time and resources which are often charged to the teacher, but are hidden and rarely officially recognised despite being crucial to the sustainability of the pedagogy. Below, I make more explicit some of these costs, and reflect on the investments required by development reforms if child-centred education is to bring about positive change in Indian government primary schools.

Child-centred pedagogies require time and space for teachers to interact with their peers within the school, planning teaching approaches, and developing resources. (The *LC* NGO intended to provide such space in teacher 'collective meetings', but this type of close support was difficult to sustain when *LC* was up-scaled to the *Nali Kali* program.) Child-centred pedagogies also require a high level of *individual* commitment and time from teachers in creating pedagogic resources, establishing classroom relations, and developing evaluative profiles for each pupil. The approach often expects teachers to socialise parents into the practice and establish new student feedback processes. Therefore, child-centred education, with its dependence on teachers' personal attributes and commitments, requires complex and relatively expensive forms of teacher-training in terms of time, resources, and selection criteria.

However, in the Mallige and Kamala contexts, these commitment and time costs were not always supported by their overarching institutional systems, which privileged the delivery of performance pedagogic models and easily measured outputs. As noted in Chapter 5, the selection of teachers to initial teacher-training and to schools in Karnataka was not based on their individual qualities or their orientation towards child-centred ideals. Once in schools, the state inspectorate was powerful in shaping teachers' practices given its strong regulation of teachers' work. This study has shown how teachers in both Mallige and Kamala clusters have had to work through difficult tensions between therapeutic outcomes sought by child-centred reforms and the dominant performance orientation of the school inspectorate. In some cases, as discussed in Chapter 7, these tensions saw a pulling back towards more tightly framed instructional discourses.

This research has revealed the complexity of Indian teachers' professional knowledge, which needs greater recognition not only in the research context but in education decision-making processes. The democratic discourses of progressive reform mean little unless teachers' work is valued and supported structurally – the hidden 'costs' to teachers' time and resources must be addressed via a greater material and systemic focus within the school arena. While recommendations to address teachers' professional status, invest in teacher education, and increase teachers' participation in policy-making processes are not new (cf. Batra 2005; Dyer 1996), this study has shown how important these recommendations are to achieving local and sustained pedagogic change.

The question remains as to whether development goals for improving the 'quality' of Education For All are being achieved by the widespread sponsorship of child-centred programs across developing countries. Barrett's (2009) review of global development discourses showed how 'quality' has been influenced by school effectiveness models focused on a set of 'enabling inputs' and easily measurable outcomes, or in Chabbott and Ramirez's words, 'a menu of technical-functional education needs' (2006:182). In such models, interventions for quality improvement are seen as encountering social and educational contexts, rather than as co-constituted by contextual relations. Barrett has argued that effective teaching in global 'quality' frameworks is only evidenced by a set of narrow, externally determined, and apparently value-free outcomes for schooling. The social messages of pedagogy are of little relevance in this approach. Such acontextual, rarefied ideas about the effectiveness of schooling establish educational 'quality' as a rational discourse which, as this study has shown in the Indian context, becomes formalised through national and NGO programs for education development.

Child-centred pedagogic reforms in the Indian context need to explicitly address the material conditions of Indian rural education but also, importantly, the dominant social discourses that reproduce deficit models of rural learners. In order for child-centred ideals of democratic and egalitarian schooling to become more durable, teachers and the educational bureaucracy need to be supported to engage critically with the deeply stratified social order in Indian society. Pedagogic instruction is unlikely to be transformed if reform actors are not enrolled to support the social principles behind this transformation. Reformers, educational bureaucrats, teacher-educators, and teachers need to engage explicitly and critically with caste, regional, gender, and class relations in school communities. The silence over these issues can be deafening within the Indian schooling system: arguably, the 'scientisation' of effective teaching has left the social and political workings of teaching largely untouched.

This book has highlighted how child-centred education and its therapeutic 'outcomes' for the learner is far from value-neutral. Its association, then, to 'quality' improvement in rural Indian schools needs to be understood in relation to its social and political effects as much as its cognitive outcomes. In a country as populous, diverse, and stratified as India, educational and social transformation is always going to be challenging, which is precisely why attention to socio-material relations in education reform is so important. In light of the enduring promise in development discourses that child-centred pedagogies can achieve 'quality' education for the poor, I hope that this critique allows us to reflect on the possibilities for structurally supported pedagogic change in the future.

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Appendix: Notes on Caste

The Hindu caste system deeply inscribes the social order in India. The caste of a community is determined by that community's 'ritual status' (referring broadly to their 'purity' and standing in Hindu rituals). The thousands of caste groups in India are stratified into a four-tiered hierarchy of ritual status. The ranking of groups within this four-tiered hierarchy is considered 'innate, universal, and collective' and is thus not seen as mutable (Bayly 1999:10). The reproduction of caste identity usually occurs through the family (with marriage occurring within caste groups), and a caste community is often networked through shared occupation.

In modern India, caste and social class are intermeshed, such that ritual status is not the only determinant of social hierarchy (cf. Kaul 1993). The concept of 'dominant' castes, coined by sociologist M.N. Srinivas, is widely used to take into account a number of factors that influence social ordering in India: '[n]umerical strength, economic and political power, ritual status, and western education and occupation, are the most important elements of dominance' (Srinivas 1987:114). Social hierarchies are thus shaped by complex social forces as well as 'innate' ritual stratification.

When it comes to representing caste/class demographics in India, broad social categories are often used for bureaucratic purposes like census collection and government schemes. School data referred to in this study classify students and teachers into three main social groups: scheduled tribe (ST), scheduled caste (SC) and other. The ST category refers to tribal groups in India who are socially oppressed communities that are not considered part of the Hindu ritual hierarchy. The SC category refers to caste groups that have low ritual status, and have thus suffered significant socioeconomic marginalisation. The term 'scheduled' is used to describe these two groups in reference to their being scheduled in the constitution for protective arrangements, development efforts and compensations (like reserved places in educational institutions and government employment). The 'other' category officially

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used in Karnataka schools refers to all non-ST and -SC community groups.[1] It is important to note, however, that each category consists of numerous, diverse communities and caste groups across the country.

In the schools examined in this study, the ‘other’ category was predominantly made up of intermediate-caste Hindus (those neither at the top nor the bottom of the ritual hierarchy). The intermediate castes appearing in the ‘other’ category in school data and in teacher background data include Vokkaliga, Lingayat and Koorgi. There were only a few Muslim children attending the Mallige and Kamala cluster schools, and no children from Christian or other religious backgrounds. These non-Hindu communities have internal social orders, but are also officially classified as marginalised ‘minority’ groups in the wider social hierarchy.

There were a number of high-caste Brahmin teachers but no Brahmin pupils attending the schools in this study. Despite their small number in Karnataka, Brahmin communities historically used their high ritual status and social power to become prominent in education and state service. However, their social and economic dominance in rural communities had declined by the mid-nineteenth century, when they migrated from villages to towns and cities in search of greater social opportunity (Kaul 1993:41). As Brahmin communities left the rural areas, they sold their land and privileges to two communities of dominant castes in Karnataka, the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats. These communities have since asserted much political and economic power in the state. In the village of Mallige, the Marathi community are now the dominant caste. The Marathis are the primary landowners in the village who run a number of businesses and make up a significant proportion of the population.

According to 2001 Census data, in Karnataka 16.2% of the population are classified as scheduled caste and 6.2% are scheduled tribe. The scheduled tribe category in the schools of this study was primarily constituted by the Nayaka community. The Nayakas make up 83.4% of the total ST category in the state and are primarily agricultural labourers. According to 2001 Census data, the literacy rate of the Nayaka community is 47.3%. The inclusion of the Nayaka community in the scheduled tribe category was relatively recent and was not without contestation, as demonstrated by Annapurna (2002). It was only in 1984 that the Government of Karnataka recommended to the Central Government that the Nayaka community be treated as ST, and also made available compensations to this community. The inclusion of the Nayaka community in the ST category significantly increased the proportion of ST groups in Karnataka (cf. GoK 2006).

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[1] The Constitution of India also recognises the category of other backward classes, referring to lower-caste groups who have been socially, economically and educationally marginalised. See Ramaiah (1992) for a perspective on the contestation surrounding the OBC classification.

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