

Conversation:

Making bureaucracy work – Norms, education and public service delivery in rural India

Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) CSEP Research Foundation

6, Dr Jose P Rizal Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021, India

Ph: 011 2415 7600

CSEP Research Foundation

Regd. Off: Second floor, 6, Dr Jose P Rizal Marg
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021 India
T: +91 11 2415 7600 E: info@csep.org W: www.csep.org

Speaker(s)

Akshay Mangla

Associate Professor, International Business, University of Oxford

Amarjeet Sinha

Senior Fellow, CSEP

Priyadarshini Singh

Fellow, CSEP

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Sandhya Venkateswaran:

Welcome everyone to what promises to be a really exciting discussion today. I want to specifically welcome professor Akshay Mangla. Who is a political scientist and an associate professor of international business at the university of oxford business school. The one other question I wanted to ask him, where does all this work fit into a business school. But we will let that be for a moment. He is done enormous and very exciting work on the political economy of development and looking at comparative politics. So, basically the intersection of politics and development. In discussion with Akshay would be Mr Amarjeet Sinha who has spent a life time at the helm of policy formulation, administration, policy implementation. So, the combine of the two is what's really interesting and the other discussant is Priyadarshini Singh who is focused on the political economy of health and education within CSEP. Before I hand it over to Akshay, just a few lines on the context for this event here today. While most of our work at CSEP... I mean we are a policy think tank. So, we work on policy. But the bulk of our work is essentially looking at the 'what' of policy. What needs to happen. But I think we all recognise that the 'what' is necessary but not sufficient. Because unless we know how that's going to happen and what will really make it move, the what will remain as a nice compelling report on somebody's desk. And the 'how' part is often neglected. And in a way to address that, that is what this discussion is about. We have done a little bit of work looking at the political economy of health. But this is of course a much wider discussion. So, looking at how politics pushes policy, what are the motivations for effective implementation of policy, where does state capacity come in. I shouldn't say this in front of Amarjeet but, I will. How does one often or sometimes push bureaucracy. You are one of the best one. So, its okay. I can take this liberty. So, these are questions we don't get into and that's really the, I would say at some level that, the inadequacy of policy think tanks. So, this is an exciting conversation. I think Akshay is going to talk a lot about the book that he has done. Which is focused on education but the discussion and the lessons are much wider. So, you may have focused on education but really, they would apply to a lot of other issues. So, with that Akshay, over to you.

Akshay Mangla:

Thank you. I don't know. Standing here is a bit odd. Would it be alright if I move around a little bit? I have a tendency to do that. First of all, thank you so much for the invitation and thank you for taking the time to engage with my work. This book was a long struggle and I think in the process I have learned a lot. Happy in the course of presenting some of this and to take some questions. I think most of the Q&A we will reserve for later. I have prepared a presentation with way too many slides. You will have to excuse me. I may have to breeze over some of the slides. But happy again to take a lot of questions afterwards. The title of the book is "making bureaucracy work - Norms, education and public service delivery in rural India". And as rightly mentioned, it's a book that is focused on education. But touches on wider issues about how governance works. How systems work. And bureaucracy is a core part of that and one needs to actually understand how bureaucracy as an institution operates. That's really the motivation. So, the driving question of the book is what makes bureaucracy work, particularly for the least advantaged, for those for whom accessing the bureaucracy itself can be challenging and in the process of seeking services they can often find it difficult to actually interact in a productive manner with the state bureaucracy. And I operationalise this big question focusing on education and India provides a kind of laboratory to study this that there has been a history now of advancing national level policies and programs and not withstanding the same national framework, constitutional framework, policies that are drafted at the national level, there is actually wide variation in how states have carried out their implementation on the ground. And so, this variation is really the starting point for the book. So, I will say a bit more about the kind of theories that I am working with in the book and move on towards the empirics. A bit about theory. So, one is, the state capacity has been understood as the ability of the state to implement

policies across a territory. And a lot of the work that's been done in political science is to try to understand why do countries vary? So, there is a lot of studies looking at cross national variation in outcomes like economic development outcomes, but also human development, social development outcomes like life expectancy, like infant mortality or like even access to education. And state capacity is found to be a key variable. But interestingly another literature focused on education has really been giving less attention to capacity per se, but a lot more on differences in public spending and policy design which are very important. So, nowhere in my discussion should I be seen to disagree with that importance. Of course, things need to be funded. But yet, so much matters in terms of implementation and there is a large literature now on the economics of education in particular, that shows that even with a lot of spending, outcomes are often fragmented. The connection between policy design and public spending need not always result in good outcomes. So, there is a transmission mechanism between policy design, between funding and outcomes that needs to be opened up. That is the black box that I am trying to focus on in this book. I don't think I need to go through all of this with this audience. These are some of the national programs that have evolved over time in India, the midday meal program which is the world's largest child nutrition scheme, programs like Sarva Siksha Abhyan which provides school in every village and this kind of has been evolving since the 1990s and 2000s. and India has a very large, if not the largest public school system in the world with significant achievements like 95% enrolment, crossing that threshold, which is seen as an important threshold to actually transition into higher levels of literacy as a country. But as we all know, the quality of services that are provided in schools are often leaving much to be desired. And often vary across states. So, this is just one outcome that gets closer to quality, which is about student attendance. Not enrolment, but have you attended school in the previous week. This is from the national family health survey. You see a very large variation across Indian states. Well, where states that may have similar levels of enrolment, you can see attendance can be going from somewhere over 95% in the south and everyone knows about this case of Kerala being a model for human development, all the way up to below 70% in states in the north. Particularly the Hindi belt. Yet, what I try to do in the book is, go beyond this north south distinction which a lot of the political economy research is focused on. A lot of it has been about the sweeping broad differences between states like Uttar Pradesh and states like Kerala, there is a lot of differences between these states. And when you try to control for those differences, you see that actually there is historical factors and other variables that one cannot easily say, if there is any single cause. So, I look at variation just within north Indian states. And that's one of the methodological innovations of the book is to do carefully control comparisons across states and districts in areas that are more similar to allow us to identify mechanisms of implementation. I am just going to say in a nutshell where the book is really making its contribution. So, if you can read this slide, this is the literature on state capacity in India and these are the adjectives the Indian states has acquired over 50 plus years of academic research from being soft to being seen as weak to being weak strong, failed developmental and there is almost like this tendency towards hyphenated descriptions of the Indian state. The reason being the Indian state is not a failed state. It gets a lot of things done. Yet at the same time does not seem to get as much done as high as one's aspirations are. So, there is a sense in which the formal structures of the states are there, they are functioning, they are achieving some results. Yet, one's expectations are so much higher and the state is not able to fully meet them. What I try to argue in this book essentially, is that even if these formal structures are the same, one key variable that needs to be accounted for in understanding differences in how well states implement programs and policies are the unwritten rules. The informal norms that guide how bureaucrats behave. So, you can look at informal bureaucratic norms as being a key driver of how bureaucrats understand their policy duties. And in turn how they execute them and interact with citizens. And I will flesh this out in the presentation. So, let me start by saying that in

studying implementation I went through a lot of literature and I found that conceptions of implementation were okay, but they were missing some ingredients. One is I began with this notion of implementation as a set of tasks. And this comes out of public administration literature that implementation is all about executing tasks over a territory. But the thing to note is that for services like education and other services as well, you can take public health, you can even take policing for that matter, policies are not simply delivered. Services aren't simply provided. They are actually co-produced with citizens. The participation of citizens really matters. If you can think of this hall right here, there is a presentation, there is a talk happening, you are all participating as an audience. And you can think in a classroom when a teacher is teaching, children just showing up, being there, listening to the teacher, they are actually co-producing their own education. And this is not a minor point. It is actually a critical point. Because you could think about all the tasks for which societal input becomes much more important and those can require different type of relationship, a different type of activities by the state to encourage it even more. So, what I do in the book is, I look at tasks across the spectrum. From those that are most codifiable like infrastructure. You can write in a book what should be the specifications for a school building and one time build that building and it is not as you could say complex as everyday routine monitoring of services in the school. So, this task complexity becomes a key access on which you can decipher between different tasks the school administration has to perform. And the more complex tasks such as teaching, monitoring schools and so on, require thicker interactions across state and non-state actors. This becomes quite relevant not only because it means you need people to coordinate between state and society, but also power relations come in because we know that actually the groups that are targeted with universal programs like education and health are often the least advantaged in society and they may have the hardest time participating in decision making in school governance. Therefore, one has to think about the power relations and conflicts that are part of implementation. Implementation is not just a technical act, it's a political act and I think that's important. Just a kind of push to the literature just to start with, to understand better what is it we are even trying to explain. This is... sorry you can't read it. But when I operationalise implementation from low to high complexity, I break it apart into tasks that are less complex to more complex, you could do this for health, you could do this for other policy areas. But this is just pointing to where I do this in the book. Let me get to what my theoretical argument is. Which is that, norms shape implementation and they do so by guiding how bureaucrats understand the rules of the game. So, norms you can think of as unwritten rules that widely shared but they shape discretion. When you think about as an official, not everything can just be given in the administrative handbook. A lot is open up for discretion. And norms come in to help guide officials as to how they interpret what their responsibilities are. And they are learned over time through their routine actions that a bureaucrat experiences over the course of one's career. It can be reinforced through training for example. The important part here is that, norms shape how bureaucrats behave. But in turn also will shape how society experiences the state. Because as citizens seek a service, they will begin to see what are the norms that are guiding how bureaucrats will respond to me. If I am a mother I go to a school, I seek to engage in monitoring the midday meal program. The way a bureaucrat behaves towards me will condition my future expectations and proclivity to participate in that process of governance. So, that outcomes of implementation will require both bureaucratic actions driven by norms, but also societal feedback. So, there is these two channels that I trace in the book. Now in a nutshell what I am trying to get at in terms of how norms drive implementation is really around these two distinct sets of bureaucratic norms. These are theorised out of literature but also out of my empirical fieldwork. So, I build and test these distinct forms of bureaucracy. One is called legalistic and the other is deliberative. And the way you could think about this is the distinction between rules based governance and a commitment to rules and commitment to solving problems. These distinct commitments, these

distinct orientations lead to different types of organisational dynamics. In a legalistic bureaucracy you will tend to have hierarchy reinforced, an emphasis on compliance with rules, information will tend to be that which the state produces and that is the kind of prioritised information for policy implementation and for frontline officials this is the local level school administrator, the emphasis will be to select among the policies available. But not to go over and above and beyond that. Because the idea is that, if you go beyond the rules, you could be breaking the rules and there is a deep concern in here about protecting the integrity of the state and corruption as well. Deliberative bureaucracy is about solving problems and I won't go into the whole kind of history of this literature on. Its really coming out of these theories of deliberative democracy and I kind of import that into bureaucracy and argue that actually we should think about deliberation as not just a feature of an electoral system but also features of state systems and state institutions themselves. So, a problem oriented bureaucracy will tend to encourage participation across hierarchy and often lower level officials will identify local knowledge, colloquial knowledge, knowledge that might not be written but might require engaging with the local level practices in a community and that kind of pushes up information from the local level up and policy rules get modified. What I argue in the kind of the outcome side of these two things is that, what you will see in legalistic bureaucracy is an implementation process and set of outcomes that are more uneven where the codified tasks that I shared with you earlier, the tasks that are less complex get implemented well, but those that require thick interaction between state and society do a lot worse. And then in the case of deliberative bureaucracy, you get much more adaptive implementation rules and policies are adapted to suit local needs. Now, in making this distinction in the book, I don't want you to think that this is just a kind of a binary that you either have a good bureaucracy or a bad bureaucracy. In fact, a legalistic bureaucracy is quite an achievement. When you think about the kind of political economy of development, a lot of what foreign aid agencies do when they go into developing countries is say, you need to become a legalistic bureaucracy, you need to show compliance, you need to show reports, you need to show spending is done properly. So, in some sense what is the alternative? Well, it is corruption, its clientelism, that's the kind of alternative. So, this is not a bad bureaucracy and this is not necessarily a good bureaucracy. It depends on the task. A task that is more complex, I argue would be better carried out, better implemented by a deliberative agency because they are able to take in local level information in a way that a legalistic agency is not. But a legalistic bureaucracy could be very good at implementing large scale things that don't require a lot of societal input. For example, building roads, building schools. But getting the school to work, I argue would require something more than that. You may want to know where these bureaucracies come from? And this is a portion of the argument that gets into the political history of the states. I look at it in India and try to understand where, how and when do these norms consolidate and I don't think you can just theorise this, you actually have to look at the interaction between politicians and bureaucrats in the period of state formation. Particularly what I find is that, whether bureaucrats were cooperating with politicians or competing with them for power, makes a big difference in terms of what kinds of norms consolidate over time. I am not going to get too far into this for want of time. But I am happy to talk about the political origins of these different types of systems. Let me just share some of the findings of the book. A bit about what I did. I did a multi-level comparative analysis across four states. So, in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, this provided a kind of, you could call it a paired comparison, where you have lot of similarities in terms of geography, social context, structures, income levels, yet variation in outcomes. Then Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and within each of these states, I didn't just stick at the state level. I went down to the district and village level. So, there is a tracing of implementation decisions from a state capital to a district, to a school and at each state I try to select places where you can actually draw robust comparisons to identify the impact of norms over implementations. Again, I will have to skip

past this. A bit of the data collection. So, again, this is multi-level, just like the design, I interviewed state actors, at the national level, state level, district level, and then non-state actors from a bottom up angle. And this involved focus group discussions with groups like this. This is a women's association in a village, that was in charge of a midday meal, this is Saharanpur in UP. And the idea is to understand both from the bottom up and the top down, how is it that policies actually get implemented on the ground. About 850 odd interviews and some 103 focus groups, this was many years of field work and I would never recommend anyone to plan a study like this. In fact, a study like this kind of pulls you and takes you into different places. You don't design it, it designs you in many ways. Some findings and I will share very briefly something that I observed from my fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh and I will quickly share some work, some findings from Uttarakhand. And suggest some alternative implications from these two states. So, in Himachal Pradesh, you could in a nutshell look at it as a state that has done relatively well, not just in terms of expansion of schooling, but relatively speaking, better quality services than other states in north India. In Uttarakhand coming at it from a similar level of income, similar social structure has not done nearly as well as one would have hoped. And particularly in terms of quality and actually very high rates of privatisation. So, the starting point is relatively weak, initial conditions for Himachal Pradesh. So, this is just the distinction with Kerala and I think this is an important distinction, is that when Kerala started at independence, it was already many times higher in terms of literacy than many other states. Himachal Pradesh was among the bottom five literacy states in India. So, this is truly a story of transforming an education system over time rather than a head start. I think that's a useful starting point because a lot of developing countries, a lot of states simply don't have that head start. So, they can't rely on history to help them. They actually have to make decisions, undertake actions in the present. So, what did Himachal Pradesh do? So, this is a school in outskirts of Shimla district approaching Kulu district and as you can see, if you are a bureaucrat sitting in the back here somewhere, posted somewhere, you could not monitor this school. It is just very difficult to get to logistically. And so, one element of how deliberation has enabled the state to govern is to rely on societal input, from the planning stage, all the way down to local level monitoring. So, I in the book, break apart different types of examples of how education planning and resource provision has happened. It's not just about the quantity of resources that are being directed towards education, but also their quality. How is it that those resources are being utilised and in Himachal Pradesh I found, just these are three examples of having planning meetings that are much more participatory. So, local groups, civil society agencies are part of the planning process. Local knowledge is brought in to experiment and kind of adapt policies and try things out and as a consequence make things work much better for local communities and I have two examples of this kind of adaptation that takes place. The district academic calendar. So, the districts are given a lot more flexibility as to when they time their examinations. This allows them to ensure that kids can practically attend the exam. It doesn't conflict with the harvest season because children may be working in the fields. So, there is a kind of pragmatic, you could say, dimension to this, which by the way, not every one may like. One may argue from a child rights perspective that this is violating child rights. You are acknowledging kids are working, that there is child labour. On the flip side, this is a model that's allowed children to possibly do both things. I will give a bit of input or empirical evidence from the village level. So, this is a village again, with highly unfavourable initial conditions. So, it was an interior village located in the outskirts of Shimla. Relatively poor. Heterogenous in terms of caste. A large SC community in this village and yet the school was relatively well functioning. The time I spent there doing field work, parents were very satisfied with the quality of education. In fact, there was a private school nearby, nobody in the village was sending their kids to that school saying, we much prefer not to waste our money on that. We would rather be part of this school and contribute to it. So, how did that happen? It wasn't kind of written in

history. In fact, the school for quite some time faced some problems. There wasn't electricity connection at the school. Parents were describing cases where teachers didn't show up on time. So, in some sense it required some input from the bureaucracy and local community to really turn it around. And one group that helped is this group, which is a Mahila Mandal. So, those of you who are familiar with Himachal Pradesh, is a history of informal women's associations. These are groups that have been managing collective resources, forest, water resources and these Mahila Mandals have increasingly played a role in local governance. Given a setup where men have migrated out. So, women are in the public sphere. And the interesting innovation here from a governance perspective is that, the bureaucracy in Himachal Pradesh brought women into governance rather than kind of excluding them or seeing them as a subservient partner. So, these informal groups were actually vested with an authority, made into mother, teacher associations. MTAs. This again, breaking from the norm in other states where you had village education committees under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, often informal groups of mothers when they come to a school can be kicked out. Can be told you are not part of this group. Or they may not even know that they are members of a village education committee. In this case, this concept of an MTA evolved out of the bureaucracy's engagement with women in the field of education. So, this is an official saying over the course of the school expansion we found women were contributing more to the schools. So, they conducted trainings. They call these trainings. But actually, it was a way to build the bridge between the local officials and the women in the village. And so, they could feel more confident that their complaints or their concerns would be heard and if they brought up an issue it would be responded to. To give just one example from this village, there is a midday meal where you get the rations that is provided but, in this school, actually they started supplementing it with local vegetables. And just took much more community ownership over the school. So, you could see kind of positive investment of the community back in the school when their concerns are heard. A bit about Uttarakhand, as a contrast. Just to start with, let us begin with the recognition that Himachal Pradesh was formed as a state in '71. Uttarakhand is much, much younger as a state. So, any comparison let us start with that distinction in mind that there is still some time to go perhaps. But I think the history of state building in Uttar Pradesh has had an impact on Uttarakhand's development of its bureaucracy. One is the kind of historical development of a law and order state and in some ways UP was the prime example before even being Uttar Pradesh, united provinces under the British, was seen as this kind of example of good governance from a colonial ruler, in that, it's all about systems and rules and ensuring order. Not about providing quality services. Let alone for the masses. And this kind of tradition was reinforced after independence. So, the national academy of course, put in Missouri, you can look at the list of who's been a cabinet secretary in India, 15 out of 31 has come out of UP. So, the idea of what it means to be a good bureaucrat, now we may also be puzzled by that we don't think of UP as the best governed state many times. But from a bureaucracy angle from the notion of legalism, from a kind of law and order state angle, UP was seen as a desirable place. Even for young bureaucrats. I am sure Amarjeet can tell us that when thinking about where you are getting posted, UP is seen as a potential avenue towards the career that can take you into New Delhi. Now, you may think that this could all get disrupted, there was a moment in the 80s and 90s in particular where underprivileged caste mobilised Mayawati as the first Dalit chief minister of UP, really tried to break this kind of bureaucracy that was seen as heavy handed against underprivileged groups and one of the kind of slogans was "samaan ki rajneeti" as opposed to "vikas ki rajneeti". So, it is all about building kind of recognition as a social group. But the interesting thing here is that what is underappreciated about Mayawati's leadership is that, she actually took law and order as a central concern. Policing was one of the first things that she put emphasis on to ensure that there is an orderly treatment of underprivileged groups, the SC, ST atrocities act got a lot of attention. So, legal tools started to be used as a way for marginalised groups to make their demands. so,

there is a kind of reinforcement of legalism even under a system that is seeking a change. And what this does is as Mayawati comes and she is very famous for having transferred a lot of bureaucrats. Bureaucrats found ways to protect themselves as well, using administrative rules. So, there is a kind of rule reinforcement in this period of time. So, this is a school in Uttar Pradesh in Saharanpur. Coming out of the constituency which had a lot of support for BSP at the time of my field work. Here bureaucracy was emphasising rational planning. They invested in school buildings and an inspection regime. There wasn't as if nothing was happening. In fact, when I was there, I remember a school teacher telling me that actually there is almost a terror that if we don't ensure that the midday meal is being properly administered and that there is a girl's toilet in the school, that it will become a big media case. And so, we need to actually ensure that we are doing this well and responding to all the rules being given to us from Lucknow. So, these local agencies and the process are actually overriding community demands. Going back to the same school, you could see this boundary wall that was built. Actually, the local community wanted to expand this into another park area. But they couldn't because that was not seen as falling within the rules even though that area was unclaimed. And in some sense, this is an example, of how a kind of inspectorate compliance oriented bureaucracy enforces rules on a community, gets a school built. But is not able to buy in community support. Now, you can take it from the perspective of an official in Uttarakhand. This was an official that was trying to develop schools for informal settlements. And really got pushed aside. So, as he says the more I push to do something different, the more I am viewed with suspicion. My officer will begin to question me what is the motive, what kind of 'faida' I am getting out working for a community and trying to adapt a policy. So, this just illustrates the impact of this norm around legalism that if someone is trying to adapt a policy, break with the policy framework in some way to address the local need, you may not get supported. And I think the point of raising this quote is that its not as if there are bad bureaucrats in UP and all the good bureaucrats end up in Himachal Pradesh. It is not that simple. Even well meaning, well intentioned officials in the system may not get supported. So, it is a systemic issue. So, it's not just about one person not doing their job. Systematically those who are trying to break from the rules a little bit or bend the rules in a productive direction are not getting supported. Getting to Uttarakhand, Uttarakhand breaks from UP, right in 2000. This is a view from a school and I am looking down at the village. So, you can imagine this is actually the distance children would have to walk to get to the school. It's a very similar setup as it is in Himachal Pradesh in terms of the amount of difficulty of governing an education system owing to the geography. And here we see a history of 'pahadi' hill based alienation with UP's governance and that is part of the pressure for having a separate state. But there was really a lot of aspiration at this point in the 2000s. So, the politics shifted from the UP based politics of having the multi-party coalitions to having two party system with congress and BJP, similar to Himachal Pradesh and there is a literature that argues in political economy that two party systems are better at providing public goods because they are really trying to get to the median voter rather than these fragmented parties that are only targeting a particular social group or caste, community in the Indian case. A further point, in Uttarakhand, the policy makers themselves were trying to learn from Himachal Pradesh and really take the policy ideas and implant them into the education system in Uttarakhand. I will just turn to the findings from this one village and then I will conclude with one slide. And then I will finish. So, this is a Mahila Mandal in Almora district. Again, I try to compare very similar places between the two states. So, it is not as if I just looked at the plains in Uttarakhand and the hills in Himachal Pradesh. You really have to look at similar places that have similar histories. And in this village, there was history of women's mobilisation around water, around the managing the forest. And eventually this got mobilised around education. This is a Balwadi centre, a pre-primary center. Created by this group before the government had even been involved in education. Now over time this group of mothers tried to

translate this collective action towards the government school system. But they got blocked at various stages. Because they were simply not recognised as a group and the policies, they were demanding broke with a lot of norms. And one policy norm... sorry... this is a quote from a mother, I will just skip that for want of time. The local bureaucracy was simply applying rules according to their minds. This is a roadside school, they should not get extra teachers, should not get extra resources, they cannot do anything in addition. But this really leads local communities to feel as if the system is not responding to them. So, there was a big push for privatisation in this village. You saw in the village that households started sending kids to private schools. So, maybe I will skip this slide and we can talk in the Q&A but, what I have shared with you is really this side of this two by two where I have norms, legalistic and deliberative. And inequality levels here and I showed you these two where you had Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh had relatively lower inequality as compared to the plains. But you see very different outcomes. In the plains you will very different outcomes as well. I can share this slide if you want to discuss it. But I guess I will just turn to this final point. Because we are also interested in policy. What are some of the policy implications that come out of this work? Well, one is that actually at very low levels of state capacity, legalistic bureaucracy can get a lot done. In fact, anything that is compliance oriented it makes sense why governments invest so much in these rules based systems. Because it allows you to get those big large scale programs and policies done. But the challenge is that this can weaken capacity to solve problems. Particularly when you get to more complex policies. So, when you think about it in the domain of health you can think about a legalistic bureaucracy being able to carry out kind of like polio vaccine. But routine health services... so, every day and kind of recurring health cases, it's much more difficult. It requires societal input and much more interaction on a daily level. So, the same bureaucracy that can do one may not be doing the other. So, the point from policy that there needs to be lot more investment in the deliberative capacity of the state. Particularly at the local level to address those complex needs. Secondly there is a lot been written on community based development. But this assumes that communities are able, willing and capable to actually work with state actors. I mean, they may not be. They may be overwhelmed, they may face resource constraints of their own. Time constraints. So, I think the emphasis that's been there on decentralisation is insufficient in that you can give authority to the local level but you build capabilities for local level actors to actually participate and make and co-develop decisions at the local level. I think that's where the investment needs to go. And finally in terms of education in particular India's national education policy, the UN sustainable development goals make a lot out of foundational learning and the emphasis is on resources and the educational bureaucracy. But when I look at what it requires for education system to deliver quality a lot of it requires there to be coordination across agencies. So, this is at the very local level between education and it could be community groups, it could be between education and health bureaucracy. But that level of coordination and routinised feedback between different levels of government, that is the area, you could call it the software of the state bureaucracy. And the emphasis so far, I think has been largely on the hardware and that is where I would argue that we need a bit more emphasis. So, I know I have gone well over time. So, I will just stop there and happy to take questions and comments.

Amarjeet Sinha:

Thank you very much, Akshay for absolutely enlightening presentation. I remember Akshay many years ago. The researcher moving around among other states in Bihar as well. And his Himachal... and luckily Priyadarshini sent me a soft copy of the book three days ago. I have had a chance to read the book cover to cover. And that's why compliments to you for your work. Anuradha is here. I was reminded of our field surveys in the probe study. And especially Himachal where we had to recognise the schooling revolution there. And some other factors. The legalistic and the deliberative, that's how you have made that distinction. There can be a

few questions, counter questions. One, you have added to the body of knowledge for sure. And you have made people like us survive in the sense you have not thrown the bureaucracy out of the window. You just said on how it can be structured differently. But one question. You have also had covered some efforts which were made in Bihar. And I think that analysis of yours I really liked. But that distinction of legalistic and deliberative, I would add another dimension. That is again, what happens in a failed state where institutions, regular recruitments had all stopped for 20 years. So, you have done an analysis of quality interventions under mission Gunvatta. I think chapter seven in which you have looked at how... because it was legalistic therefore beyond a point it was about level based learning among children rather than class based. Similar levels of knowledge level in small clusters. And the argument that you have made that because it was legalistic therefore perhaps it did not sustain. The counter view can be that if your administrative machinery, whether it is for quality institutions, whether it is for administrative management, if they have somehow been dysfunctional for 20 years, it doesn't matter whether you are deliberative or legalistic. Under both systems you do come across these bumps. So, from that point, while you have looked at the historical evolution of these institutions, that was one point which struck me. The other also is the post-colonial roll out of the school system in India. As all of us are aware of article 45, a directive principle, but it was most used to justify takeover of schools from private management to government management. The provincialisation of schools which happened across the country, every state was not necessarily a fair process. Yes, it improved the emoluments of school teachers, which is a very good thing. But it also took away their accountability to local communities and made them state bureaucracies. All in the name of directive principles article 45, state shall endeavour to provide education up to 14 years. We took over all those responsibilities. That also happened on a as is where is basis. No reservation rules applied; no other rules applied. Whoever was the teacher on a particular date continued to be a government teacher thereafter. So, that whole process itself was fraught with lot of issues. A related issue in some of the northern Indian states, especially UP, Bihar, is also the perception of a school, first as a polling booth and then as a school. Now, I think this is again, micro level political realities of certain areas, where the school is also seen by the political elite as where votes will be cast. And the consequence of it for misgovernance of systems. I am just flagging a few issues for you to respond. And thereafter I will request Priyadarshini to raise her issues. Would you like to respond to both together?

Akshay Mangla:

I am happy to do either. Whichever way.

Priyadarshini Singh:

I will just add a few of my observations and then maybe you can take it together. The timing of this book talk is excellent because I have literally just come back from Karnataka where me and Prajakta were doing field research on elementary education and primary healthcare in two districts of Shimoga and Belgaum. And I am just reflecting on some of the sort of conceptual framework that you have laid out in the book to sort of make sense of what we observed over there and in light of that I would like your thoughts on three things. Firstly, I think one of the things that you highlight is that the distinctive aspect of a deliberative bureaucracy is its capacity to frame the problem and work solutions around the problem. And this is what I found to be one of the most difficult things as we went down from the state level right down to the primary healthcare level versus the school level. The understanding of what is the problem, is itself extremely complicated and determined by the political economy not just at the state level but also at the district level, also at the city level? Also, at the school level. Right? So, some schools which were seen as election booth, the teachers themselves said – madam, yeh booth hai na? yeh achha dheek raha hai. Yeh booth nahi hota tho, jo hai who bhi nahi hoga. (यह बूथ है ना, यह अच्छा दिक् रहा है | यह बूथ नहीं होता तो, जो है वह भी नहीं होगा |) Said, this is an election booth and hence the school infrastructure looks marginally better, but if it wasn't an election booth,

possibly even this would not be there. For primary health centres, there was a difference between PHCs that were covering a lot of slum areas consisting of migrants versus those that weren't. and those which were sort of relatively newer in local politics versus that were established parts of the local political economy. The second thing I noticed was, that there is something about the history of the district administration's interaction with the local political elites that also shapes the implementation of policies at the district and subdistrict levels. So, there were marked differences between the two districts where we went. So, Belgaum has a history of the Marathi Kannada conflict, it's a border district, so there was something very different way in which bureaucracy was functioning in Belgaum being part of north Karnataka which is historically more underprivileged versus Shimoga which is south Karnataka. So, I do feel that it is not just at the state level which you are talking about, but it sort of unpacks at the level of district and below. And my last sort of comment is that the points that you are mentioning about the bureaucracy being able to function in a deliberative manner internally and also in its relationship with the society. I was wondering whether it is likely in a sector like education which has a certain pattern of historical mobilisation, people have been thinking and talking about primary education for a fairly long period of time in India versus primary health care which is seen as a lot more technical area in a way that the ordinary person who reaches out to a PHC or judges the capacities of a doctor or a nurse or whoever, feels a bit inhibited. That you know, they feel that – hum kaise batha sakte hain. Wo tho doctor hain. (हम कैसे बता सकते हैं | वो तो डॉक्टर हैं |) The whole sort of razmataz of health. You know the drugs, the equipment, the infra etc which in some ways also protects the bureaucracy from being accountable. But also, then creates a different kind of need for mobilisation at the society and the bureaucracy level to be able to for the bureaucracy to be deliberative in the way that we are observing in elementary education. So, I will just stop there.

Amarjeet Sinha:

We will have Akshay respond and then questions.

Akshay Mangla:

Sure. Could I just do it in the reverse order. Let's start with this where is bureaucracy more likely to deliberate. So, the first is, I would say that I don't think India's mass education system, the history of it is one of terribly high deliberation particularly by parents. There are certainly deliberations at the national level going from even pre-Kotari commission, thereafter so many commissions, so many reports and deliberations that took place at that level. Perhaps that happened more at the elite level than it did in health. But at the local level the same things that you are saying, parents would say to me in my field work, what can we do. It is the teacher after all. I don't know. We are uneducated. Like this the same exact notion that there is an expertise and I don't have it and caste is overriding all that by the way. So, this notion that I cannot do that. Perhaps its amplified in health given the technical nature of what health provision is and expertise and I would like to think about that harder. So, I appreciate the prod that if one of the service providers has a specialised knowledge that is seen as kind of beyond one's access maybe it makes it harder to deliberate and I would say in favour of your point, there is a lot of research that's being done on lack of deliberation in hospitals and this is between hospital staff. Between nurses and doctors. And this is in the west, this is in the UK, in the US and elsewhere. That, because doctors carry that kind of technical expertise and they have the legal support behind it. Because only they can take the decision. Others who may have knowledge that's irrelevant. For example, the nurse maybe seeing the patient more regularly. It doesn't feel as empowered. So, I think there is an important point there and I have to think harder about it, but I don't think it's the case necessarily that education is been a wellspring of deliberation. At least, in India. In terms of this kind of district interaction with local politics. I just swept over this in my slides. But in each of these districts, part of what I wanted to do was uncover this particular thing. Which is that, we cannot see the district as just being subsumed by the state. They have political

economy histories. This is partly... this drove the district selection. So, one reason I chose Shimla and Almora districts is that these were both sites of lots of military recruitment in the kind of pre-colonial and in the colonial period and post-colonial period elites in these two places invested in elite education and so there was an investment by the district by the way. This is the district working with political elite. So, I think that certainly plays out. I would just argue that in the case of this book and I certainly take the point that there is a lot of local level variation that I am sweeping over. What I find, having looked at different districts I find some similar patterns. That's not to say local level patterns don't matter. I think the burden on the book's argument was about state differences. But I should not at all say that local level differences aren't there. Then you raised this thing about schools as electoral booths. And it could be that, yeah, local level factors. It could be that because these schools... and that's getting below district. The same you could say roadside schools. Those are the places that gain a lot more visibility if a bureaucrat is travelling, district collector is travelling. Huh, lets go see this school. It's on the roadside. So, that inevitably will play out. The question is what happens in those local level interactions and I would argue that a rules legalistic agency will focus on those as inspections and a deliberative bureaucracy will tend to see these as opportunities to discuss problems. I think there is a different way that same visibility can be carried out. I knew Bihar would have to factor in and I didn't present on it. Let me say a couple of things. One is your point is absolutely correct. That the starting point for states needs to be taken into account. The political history of where a state is, why it's doing what it is. It isn't just given by sheer chance. It made a lot of sense given Bihar's political and administrative history to really push to get systems there in the first place. This paper by a bureaucrat, it was Santhosh Mathew, a state incapacity by design describing how the Bihar bureaucracy was made incapable by the political elite. So, you have to recover from that. So, the emphasis on all these things about discipline... in the first term of Nitish Kumar in particular and this emphasis on showing up to work and all, it makes a lot of sense. But the challenge becomes is that on top of that system, you are trying to make it legalistic out of what is there as kind of a, you could say a failed state or a flailing state. If you are land ___. You are trying to create a system that at least operates at some level, on top of that you are putting in quality reforms, I think that was really the contradiction, it's not that Bihar just failed because it was legalistic. It had to invest in rules. The problem is that it moved very quickly and this could be an argument that you think about reforms as being more incremental. It went very quickly to quality reforms. And that would be my reading of that. Quite admirably. People like yourself pushed for quality reforms. But the question is can you build quality reforms on a system that is just trying to get the systems to work on a rule based way. And on top of that giving teachers discretion, there was a lot of mixed signals to school teachers on the ground. Do, I follow rules or am I supposed to using my discretion as to how to reach out and teach them. So, I think that was really the challenge that. Maybe we are just demanding too much of the state at one time. I know that sounds odd to say. But perhaps that could be. The other is about post-colonial, article 45 and the kind of government taking control and I think I don't know if you got to it. But I have this section that is chapter 8. I look at Kerala and one element that's not studied about why Kerala's education system has done better is that there has been a lot more private management of publicly or private aided schools. So, religious authorities and this is getting to the history of Kerala's system having to compete between different religious groups, between the church, the communist party and other religious associations. They were given a lot more local level authority to manage the school. And that might be something to look at more closely that it is public aided but give private management the ability to hire and fire and enable the accountability at that level. That didn't happen elsewhere. And so, maybe that is the aberration in the case of Kerala. And then the last again, I think this is getting to the earlier point that was raised by Priyadarshini about schools being seen as a voting booth. Rather than a school. You know, its interesting. A school is seen as

many different things but last is it is seen as a school. It is a voting booth, it is a place to hold your food grains, in some schools I went to was a place to actually feed animals. The midday meal is also a place where animals are eating. So, literally what is a school. And I do think that there is a kind of added burden. You can add to teachers like, what is a school teacher? I am an election booth operator, I am a census worker, I am doing 10 other things. So, this notion of what is a school, having this kind of you could say schizophrenic notion of a school. Also makes the teachers feel that maybe I am not a teacher. Maybe what I need to do is respond to these other duties, administrative duties. I think that point is well taken that I don't think we have settled yet what exactly is a school for in the first place.

Amarjeet Sinha:

Thank you so much, for your response.

Audience (Neethi Rao):

Thank you very much. Firstly, many congratulations on the book. I know it's been a sometime and glad to hear. I should say first off that I resonated entirely with a lot of what you said. And I appreciate it in particular you placing the onus of sort of building this deliberativeness so to speak, or participatory-ness, I would say, within the bureaucracy. Because I think one of the things that has happened is a lot of this kind of engagement, the onus has very much been on civil society itself. And so far, a lot of the literature including some of the past ones which were focused on this on the importance of this civic engagement has actually placed the onus of building this capacity on civil society, rather than on the bureaucracy. So, I very much appreciate that. But I did wonder then and this goes to some of the things that Amarjeet and Priyadarshini have already raised. About, what sort of enabling environment is then required for the bureaucracy to be able to perform a more deliberative, more participatory function. And also, just as a corollary to say to Priyadarshini's comment about technicalities of health and maybe it being more easier in education, just to say that the WHO is actually along with the whole different countries are now saying we need to institute this kind of deliberativeness and participatory-ness throughout and there is going to be a proposal. A world health assembly proposal initiated by many countries including Thailand and Sri Lanka and Slovenia and so on. Just this year. So, pushing our own government to sort of in favour of that is valuable. So, one is about the enabling environment. The second thing I was just missing if you would allow me, is this aspect of time. And I think that's a key difference between these two sorts of frames that you have used the legalistic and the deliberative ones. How much time does it take and what sorts of inputs are needed for this kind of, to use your word, deliberativeness to be created? But then also to be sustained over time. And again, we have seen in health for example that there have been some amazing examples including in polio by the way. We didn't get to the polio vaccination without participatory outreach. But for it to be sustained in a way that is across all of these and again coming from a health point of view, across all of the diseases, across all of the kinds of functions of the health system for example, similarly for the education, each of the other sectors. How do we look, how the temporal component of actually building this sort of participatory-ness within the system of governance? If you could reflect on that?

Amarjeet Sinha:

If I could just add to that question by the time it comes to you. On the enabling factors. Very interestingly the reserve bank of India 2023, they published a report on the state of panchayats in India. What they have done is they have looked at the devolution index for local governments across states. The devolution index has worked out on the basis of certain factors. They have tracked the performance of states on education and health against the devolution index. And what comes out very well strongly is, states which rank high on devolution perform better on health and education. So, I think this for the first time I am seeing actual correlation emerging really enabling... so, it's a next set of issues to you. In terms of between the legalistic and deliberative the role for local governments and whether that will play a role?

Audience: (Sandhya Venkateswaran):

Thanks, Akshay for the presentation. And to Amarjeet and Priyadarshini for the comments. For a bureaucrat where does the motivation to actually do what needs to be done comes from. So, you made this distinction between the deliberative and the legalistic. I guess, what I am wondering is to what extent is a bureaucrats motivation linked to a politician's motivation. This question is for all of you. Not necessarily for Akshay. Can a bureaucrat push something even though the priorities not coming from the political leaders over there? Can it be something intrinsic within the bureaucracy? When we look within India, in Tamil Nadu it is said that there is an intrinsic focus on social welfare. But there is a whole history to that. Right? That history has led to hiring a certain kind of within the bureaucracy. Then prioritise some certain set of issues. Clearly, we can't make history happen in all the states in India. So, I guess my question is to what extent is our political priorities impacting, if not, then where is the intrinsic motivation, incentives coming from?

Audience: (Laveesh Bhandari):

My question is actually related to previous question. First, have you noticed the difference in districts which were erstwhile princely states as opposed to colonial controlled states. Second, its more to Amarjeet actually. Can you ever imagine a bureaucrat 20 years into his career, oriented in a legalistic setting to actually switching and what would it take for them to do that?

Akshay Mangla:

Let me start. There is a lot of questions. I might not get everyone. This has given me a lot to think about. In terms of enabling environment, there are a couple of things. Certain historical, certainly make it easier. So, in Tamil Nadu for example, having histories of social movements and the civic agencies that emerge out of those movements, particularly movements that are targeting inequalities, I think make a big difference at the local level and having community participation. This is getting to the side of communities participating. I shared this, let me show this. I have socioeconomic inequalities on this axis on the left side. Higher inequality makes it a lot harder. If you want people to deliberate. People that have high social distance are less likely to be able to come together. That is something that's I think robustly found across many different societies. And so, if you look at the kind of places where one sees more collective action that is more robust even under a legalistic bureaucracy it will happen under lower levels of inequality. And that is a really difficult thing to start with. That's a structural condition. Then I mentioned the condition of social movements. The other enabling factor that I look at in the book is the party system. So, the two party system I find, this is in accordance with other literature. These two party systems that have competition where one party is this alteration of power. That actually makes it easier and enables this deliberation because in some sense parties complete their full terms. Its not like the situation one saw in UP where chief ministers would come and they would go in just two years, you cannot think long term, let alone deliberate over the long term if you are not at least having a 5 year window. And probably 10 years is more what you need. But some competition also encourages that. Like these are two three you could say macro political factors that I think were there. Your question is also getting at kind of sustaining. So, creating and sustaining deliberation over time. In the case of Himachal Pradesh, this is one of the challenges in the book, this really is home grown thing. So, in Himachal Pradesh one there is a local level at which this occurred through mahila mandals and other groups preceding this state. But over the time the state building in Himachal Pradesh is bureaucrats and politicians had to come together every few years just to get financing from central government. This is one of the key historical conditions in Himachal Pradesh, is that cooperation between bureaucrats and politicians was almost built into the political economy of the state. Because the finance commission, Himachal Pradesh was the first financially unviable state. And is formed as a financially unviable state. It needed central transfers and to get those

centra transfers politicians and bureaucrats had to cooperate. So, it could be out of need, that isn't a great thing from a policy angle. You have to create the conditions of need and that's not what we normally do. So, the question then becomes how do you enable this and, in a setting, where might not have this political economy history. I think that's even harder question. One is to think about like you said the time dimension of it. I don't think it happens very quickly. So, that requires policy makers and even you can think of civil societies, foreign aid agencies. Thinking about working incrementally. This kind of gets to the question of the motivation of the bureaucrat. Because how do you actually encourage and sustain a motivation. Say a system is legalistic to start with. But there you will find in those systems there are pockets of deliberation happening in them. So, this distinction between the two should not preclude us from seeing that there could be pockets. The question is can you actually scale that up in some way. Can you get a local level deliberation to kind of move up to a higher level? So, for that I think it requires there would be a lot more support of what I would call entrepreneurial bureaucrats, probably people who are pushing against the system. This kind of gets to the question a little bit about, can you imagine someone in a system that is largely legalistic switching or maybe not, but you could think about people who are kind of outliers within that system persuading those who are closer to them. A little bit. Maybe you can't get the modal bureaucrat to switch. But can you get at least a coalition say of 20%. And that might be enough and I don't know if it's a tipping point theory of change. I would have to think about that more. And I would love to hear what Amarjeet thinks about how many bureaucrats do you need and at what levels of the state to actually enable some kind of tipping point. But I have seen that, the work I am doing right now in Madhya Pradesh is on police reform. And it is focused on gender and women's security in an agency that has norms that are historically very patriarchal. And in that agency, one is finding that there are officials pushing against the grain and trying to find pockets of coming up with innovations and the question is how do you scale up and support those innovations across time. I don't have a great theory of change there. But I would love to hear maybe more examples so that we could try to theorise that together. The last point I will maybe touch on is where does the motivation come from? Is it about proximity to a politician? I think in some settings that could be the case, if you have a very charismatic politician, can I mean, you cannot ignore the role of Parmar in Himachal Pradesh. And the officials I interviewed at the district level would tell me that Parmar would go on hikes in their district with them and share his vision for the state. So, there is no question that some role of the politician is there. But in some sense even after Parmar leaves, you see this continuing. So, there is something more than just proximity to the politician. That's where I think a norm is established. And a norm in an agency and it could be agency culture. So, it's not about just an individual but an individual kind of institutionalising a vision through a larger group of people. I think this is trying to shift us from thinking about just a good benevolent leader, but think about leadership as a practice that requires maybe a larger set of people to be in kind of having a common language as to what the objectives are of the state and how we are to carry them out. I think I will stop there. I don't know if Amarjeet you want to answer these questions.

Amarjeet Sinha:

The point that Laveesh has raised, I will just like to mention the three factors. How democratic politics over time generates its own needs or requirements. One of them is women as a constituency. I am giving this example because whether it is Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, at different points of time, women's collectives came to acquire a very important position in the democratic politics of that state. If you look at nationally, 2019 is the first time and always since then, number of women voters who cast their vote is more than men. What began from Kutumbshri in Kerala... in fact before or prior to Kutumbshri what began earlier in parts of Madras presidency and Karnataka as the work of one of the civil society organisations there and the formation of women's collectives, the rural livelihood mission by

Chandrababu Naidu completely set aside the local governments. Brought in the women's collectives. Now that model was picked up by many chief ministers. Bihar you have noted about Jeevika movement in Bihar. Now Nitish Kumar thought that the women's collectives are the best foot forward for Bihar. So, lot of what the bureaucracy does is conditioned by what the political masters want. And democratic politics is moving them towards mobilisation of women's collectives. Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh, Himanta Biswa Sharma in assam, across political parties. Every chief minister wants to own the movement of women's collective and now nationally the Lakhpati Didi, this is all a manner of seeing how it is mainstreamed. Now if those collectives develop focus on quality learning in schools, it will start translating. Because again, if I look at even independent studies across some of these states, across these periods, for example say what Jha and Ritika have published about health, primary health, on Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh. Himachal again, as the state which has done better than others. But they have noted that between 2002 and 2023, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have almost caught up to Himachal. Now, why that has happened? Politically, either it was the congress government or the BJP government in Rajasthan or for Chhattisgarh, similarly primary health became very, very important. Largely because of the mobilisation of women as Mitanins and so on. So, the women's...

Audience (Laveesh Bhandari):

So, you are saying that presence of the women's collective helps make or assist in the shift from the legalistic towards let's call it deliberative. Just that?

Amarjeet Sinha:

That is one major force. Because the point that he made about an unequal social, fractured social strata, what happens is, it is impossible to get social capital out from there. Working with women is easier to break those caste hierarchies or social hierarchies. So, for example prohibition in Bihar. Its not that Nitish Kumar wanted it. But the women who vote for him demanded that, if you are back in power, we have to have prohibition. Now if those women want better quality schools in their order of preferences, well they spend a lot of money on private tuition. But it is still not that priority which is in say Himachal. One very specific example, I was an election observer in Himachal Pradesh. Not one school in the constituency closed for more than one day, the voting day. In my own home state of Bihar, I had seen schools being shut for a month. Why? The teacher has gone for election training. Today someone has to go to the booth. Something or the other for a month. But in Himachal they said, if you close the school more than one day, the parents will come on the streets. So, there is a mobilisation of -. So, therefore bureaucracy moves in to once the groundswell is there because of a deepening of democracy where schools and their quality matter, therefore this reaction.

Akshay Mangla:

If I could just add one point to that. If I were to revise the theory after thinking about it even more, one is that this link between norms shaping societal expectations, shaping implementation that I showed you that kind of that process diagram, you can think of societal feedback shaping norms over time. So, it could well be that if you create these collectives at the local level, gradually over time they can reinforce or they may even erode depending on how they are getting mobilised. But that is the bottom side. I mean, take a theorist like Jonathan Fox, he has written about what he calls the sandwich theory that is not just about the bottom, but you need that elite support at the top. I think that's what we were talking about the politician creating the enabling environment. And interestingly on the work we are doing on Madhya Pradesh on women's security this is very much been political leadership saying that women's security is a political issue. Police, you must be doing something... show that you are doing something about it. There is still a lot of slippages between show that you are doing something and doing something. That's still there is a lot of room for what the bureaucracy actually does because you can have visible things like, you have women officers out there in the street in Madhya

Pradesh they have these pink voting booths where its women officers running the booth. And women are lined up at those booths. That's very visible stuffs that might be addressing that kind of need from a political angle. But then the need that a woman might have when lodging a case in a police station might face its own political challenges. So, translating that will at the very top into programmatic reform in implementation still there is some steps that need to be taken.

Priyadarshini Singh:

We will take a couple of more questions and let our colleagues and invitees who joined online if they have any questions. So, I will start with Anuradha, Amshika and then

Audience (Anuradha):

It's very interesting because we always assume bureaucracy is a black box. And like things come here and come out there. So, it was very good that you focused on it. I was thinking of two points. One is like suppose I am from a marginalised group and in a village where my numbers of my community are few. Then is it possible any way, do you think that the bureaucrats... the chance of being participative discussion made for me to be heard. So, that was one thing I was wondering. I thought that Himachal Pradesh has one advantage being a mountainous country is its less heterogenous, the villages. So, there will be... I mean that's why being heard its easier. And the other is like, among the bureaucrats also there are many levels and frontline bureaucrats I often think like, here there is the management system pressurising them, the political pressure on them and the parents can directly access them. So, they are very sandwiched. The deliberative actions may as well be to please the local political interest as well as this. Because we often find that in a district some schools will have all the teachers, will have all the infrastructure, others won't. So, it is also part of the enabling conditions which you have been asked if you can give.

Audience (Amshika Amar):

Thank you for your presentation. and so, I actually worked on a similar project at the World Bank and we were looking at political bureaucratic motivations and how it links to health and education service outcomes. So, at the World Bank we had designed the psychometric tests. And with a bunch of questions. At the district level in Uganda, the bureaucrats were interviewed and these surveys were filled in and sort of found correlation between bureaucratic motivation and there were a bunch of psychometric questions and how it impacts health and education outcomes. I think that was a very interesting study and if you have sort of looked more deeply in bureaucratic behaviour and how it is linked to sort of state level capacity, like if there is state level capacity. You did define state level capacity but if it would be defined by bureaucratic behaviour. Also how do we actually quantify state level capacity. Because I think, quantifying it would give a better measure of let's say bureaucratic performances. And also, how the norms of bureaucracy like the legislative and others, would actually relate to bureaucratic behaviour and if there will be causality between them? Like the norms define the behaviour and the behaviour in terms defines the norms. So, these were just few comments. Thank you.

Audience (Alok Kumar Singh):

Thank you for the presentation, sir. My question is, I am trying to actually implement your framework in the health context where community participation or community feedback actually shapes institutional behaviour. In case of health what we have seen is and which is puzzling is that state with similar capacity and having similar healthcare organisation, in one context you see community participation at the village and block level seems to be working. But in other it doesn't actually. Like in case of Bihar, you can say, it doesn't. we don't see that seems to be working. In case of Chhattisgarh we see that it is working and if you can just elaborate on that part? Thank you.

Audience:

Just a quick question to both Akshay and Mr Sinha. Is that, in this entire rubric that you so very well explained, I still what I find missing in my mind is how do Panchayati raj institutions really

figure in. What role do they play as rather enablers of your maybe Mahila Mandals somewhere, maybe as mother teacher association somewhere else.

Akshay Mangla:

I will try to answer a fair number. There is a lot here. Maybe I can start with the question from Anuradha. By the way the probe report is the starting point for all of this. So, I really appreciate your engagement and that is actually partly what inspired my writing. This is thinking about these differences in even levels of community participation, what roles can this state maybe playing in that. So, to your first question, I am from a marginalised group. Is it possible that the bureaucracy will hear me? I think it is possible. One thing that one sees in agencies that encourage deliberation, I didn't bring up the case of Mahila Samakhya. But that's up there on the top right quadrant where you had a pocket, a sub unit within the education bureaucracy in Uttar Pradesh built around deliberation focused around women. And women's needs and worked very effectively at the local level with the most marginalised women. And in that instance what I argue, well, what I find in the field is that yes, indeed, there is possibility for marginalised groups to participate. But it requires a lot more active agency and engagement by the bureaucrat. It's not just created. You don't just have a platform, you have to fight for it. So, frontline workers at the Mahila Samakhya, these are the kind of workers creating these mahila Sanghs in the villages. They themselves had to often fight a lot of pressure from local leaders in the village to create even a space for women to speak. And then translate that into decision making. And so, there is this much more you could say, activist role of the frontline worker and I have written a paper about this separately which is really about kind of conflict on the front lines of the state. So, deliberation is not always happy consensus and everyone singing the same tune. But actually, a lot of conflict in the case of Mahila Samakhya and education things around say early child marriage would come up. Even the religious communities providing schools for different religious minority groups and what kind of adaptations need to be made, it was very much a conflictual process. So, I think there is possibility but it often requires even more effort. And the bureaucrat is playing this... this is kind of thinking from the perspective of the frontline worker, they are not just a bureaucrat anymore. They are almost kind of an intermediary between community and the state. And so, this is thinking about further what kind of support do those frontline workers need to be playing that role to bring in the most marginalised groups in. It cannot just be that, you tell them here is the blueprint, now you go do it. They actually need to undergo lots of training. In Mahila Samakhya's case they call it gender de-learning. That was what the training was. So, teaching the frontline workers and even school teachers to kind of undo the kind of patriarchal goggles that they might have acquired over time. I guess this also gets at this other question about frontline bureaucrats and sorts of what is their participation. So, I want to maybe turn to some of the other questions. Maybe I will start with this one about what role panchayats play in this. Panchayats are a critical part of this. One thing is to note that when I talk about bureaucracy I also look beyond the bureaucracy and societal groups and local level institutions. In the villages I looked at it, interestingly I would sit in gram sabhas for example. Education, very rarely came up. Even in Himachal Pradesh. Even in... I mean this was one of the interesting findings from my work. I just thought exactly this that this the panchayat role. Actually, often education was getting crowded out by other policies and programs and I remember very vividly though there was one gram Sabha where women's group was there and at the very end after everyone had spoken that group had brought up the issue of liquor being distributed around the election time and it's making the entire village mahoul (environment) very bad for kids. So, that was almost like a very quiet assertion by women in that audience. I guess panchayats can play a role because afterwards that the gram Pradhan brought that issue up with the bureaucrats. So, I think a lot more can be discussed or can be studied about this link between panchayat and the bureaucracy. I think a lot of the work has been around how do you decentralise and devolve funds. And less so about building that

institutional linkage between the panchayat and the bureaucracy. So, that's the direction I would take that. In terms of implementation framework in health. You found in some places community participation was effective or engaged, but in other places it wasn't. Is that? That could be there are various factors at work. Some things could be just that kind of nature of community itself. So, a lot of the pre-existing work on community based development presupposes a community that's kind of like in some suburb in the United States. Where parents are somehow come together for parent teachers' association meetings. But the reality is there is lots of conflict and social hierarchy even within communities. So, the first place I would look is what is the nature of community norms to participate and engage. If those norms within the community exists in the first place, why is it that some are participating and others are not and that's kind of where I looked at, the kind of steps when communities try to voice their demands on the state. What have been the responses? So, if you look at the top left quadrant of this, I am sorry you cannot see it so well. I look at high inequality and under a legalistic system and the co-production of education I argue is much more episodic. It is very fragmented. There is episodes and bursts of collective action. The state responds and depending on how the state responds maybe communities come together again or they dissolve or decide to seek private solutions. So, one of the factors that I found in UP to be an issue was that, because communities are so unequal to start with, in every Mohalla in a village you will find every Basti has its own school. And in fact, the school is kind of a way to distinguish your own subgroup from another even within the same caste. A different caste, a different Jati based school. So, in some sense that is already a very you could say, a fractured societal set up, there, if the bureaucracy is responding in a proactive way, it can build confidence very fast. But then you can lose trust very fast as well. So, I would like to know the sequence and the timing of interaction between community and the state. And if you can plot that out historically maybe over a period of a couple of years even, that can maybe help us understand why does participation erode in some places and not in others. About the World Bank study and looking at bureaucratic behaviour and linking it with norms, this is actually something I am doing in my current work in policing. So, we are kind of looking at how it is that police officers shift their kinds of preconceived notions about women's cases. Can it be that certain interventions lead officers, certain training maybe lead officers to begin to believe women more. So, one thing that we have done in this study is... we can talk about it off line. But essentially look at an intervention to provide dedicated services for women in a police thana. And looked at whether the training that officers get around gender and inclusion of women's cases causes a shift in how they think. And this was a randomised intervention, where we randomly assigned Thanas and randomly provided the training. We see pre and post that women officers stated that they were less likely to believe women's cases that they report false cases, they were even less likely to believe women than men. After the trainings they received they were able to... they shifted the most and they worked the most on those cases. I don't think that's a shift in norms in the bureaucracy actually. I think that's a shift in the ability of women officers to express their agency. Because I think what we, suppose my team and I is that they are confirming to a norm, you have an intervention to encourage a greater appreciation of women's cases and it allows women who are minority in the police to begin to question the dominant norm in the police agency. And I am happy to talk further about that. But I think this would be a great next stage to think about the link between norms individual behaviour. I think we need to look at both. It is not enough to just look at bureaucrats as individuals because after all they are part of bureaucracy. So, you need to look at the organisational level variables as well. So, I would be happy to talk about that further with you. But I think that's a really good point that you raised that quantifying that would be great. I think that covers all of the points. I am sure there is a lot that I am missing. I have scribbled my notes and I unfortunately cannot read my own handwriting at this point. But I thank you for all the rich discussion and the questions.

Amarjeet Sinha:

I think it was a pleasure for all of us to listen to all that you have to say. A real pleasure to listen to. I think on this point that Anuradha just as a passing remark I would like to mention, three processes on what happens to the last few families whose numbers are small but who are not looked after. Tamil Nadu again, they have something called a village poverty reduction committee in every village. What is the membership? All the vulnerable social groups and women are represented there. And through a process of consultation, they arrive at who are the ones who need support. The Kutumbshri in Kerala. The Kutumbshri has a statistical way of identifying the poor, that statistical way is subjected to a participatory identification of the poor. And then only formalized. The socioeconomic census tries to replicate that through the deprivation. But again, being a little dated but thereafter now I think eight states are trying to do exactly this. The 'Pehchan Patra'. Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, three or four other states, where they are trying to identify. Again, I think technology and these databases are helping to shape it a little. Who are these households who need more assistance rather than less? But that can probably answer one time support for things. But as a school and functioning of a school there will be challenges.

Priyadarshini Singh:

I would just like to thank everybody in the audience and thank Akshay and Amarjeet and just sort of end this discussion on two points. What the conversation has highlighted to us, how complex and challenging the mission of both the bureaucracy and the political establishment by its very nature is. But particularly in the context of a country like India and that the deliberativeness that we talk about democracy and of bureaucracy has to happen not just in democracy and bureaucracy but also in establishments like us and I am just imagining that if this sort of conversation was to happen in say Belgaum or Shimoga or a Dharwad or Hubli, how much more richer the insights would be and how much more we would gain as researchers, but we would be able to give back to frontline bureaucrats. But here is to hoping that we have more such sessions and thank you everybody.