QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA.

A review and analysis of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF-2005), with a focus on curriculum reform in primary (Grade I-V) education.

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SHXANS001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

2016

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, **Mr James David Gilmour**, for his constant guidance, encouragement and patience over the last year and a half. Thank you so much for forcing me to take a look at my work in different ways and opening my mind. The discussions helped me immensely in every aspect of my research. Also your incessant encouragement at all stages of my research work was imperative for the completion of this study.

I would like to thank **Dr. Paula Ensor** for her indispensable advice and information on the various facets of the Indian Curriculum during the coursework discussion. Yours and Mr Gilmour's class was probably the most useful class I have taken. Last year I always looked forward to both your classes of learning and rounds of snacks.

I would also like to thank **Dr. Jeanne Gamble** for taking the time out to talk with me. This helped me tremendously in bringing some clarity to my thought process.

Most of all, a big thank you to **my parents and brother- Aakash**, for their undue support. You are all my strength and without your constant love and support, me reaching so far away would have been a distant reality.

I would like to thank my 'amazing' friend- **Ankur**, for his support and encouragement throughout the process by keeping me harmonious and being a patient listener. You are a star!

My amazing and beautiful friends, **Sasha, Crystal Jade, and Amara**, thank you all so much for making my short stay in Cape Town a lot easier than I thought it was going to be. You will all make great administrators, teachers or professors some day!

Finally, to God, whose incomprehensible grace and deep love carried me through this endeavour.

ABSTRACT

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (NCF-2005) was introduced by the Government of India to address the issue of quality in education. This study aims to analyse the area of actual curriculum reform for quality aspects at the primary (Grade I-V) level, both generally and specifically within India, in order to look at the quality aspect of education, which the NCF-2005 highlights as a key aim. In light of this, the key question that the current study asks is: how does the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF-2005) address the 'quality' issue for primary education?

In order to move more closely to an assessment of 'quality' within NCF-2005, this study employed document analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodological tools. The study used CDA to generate a critical analysis of the dominant discourses in the NCF-2005 policy document alongside a framework that included tools for policy analysis. An important feature of the framework design was that it considered various definitions of 'quality' at the international level; the influence of these on the national level, and how these are operationalized in the curriculum through the NCF-2005's key monitoring tool- Quality Monitoring Tool (QMT). The primary level (Grade I-V) curriculum is used in this thesis as an illustrative case.

This study concludes with an attempt to highlight that the problem does not necessarily lie with the quality indicators or the definition of quality, nor necessarily with the curriculum itself. On the contrary the difficulty lies far more with complex implementation issues- the QMTs, the texts, and the lack of teacher training to implement the new curriculum. Also, the study highlights how the humanistic indicators that better capture the concept of 'quality' have been downplayed. Thus the thesis concludes that the NCF-2005 does not sufficiently capture the differing political, social and education ideologies resulting in a subsequent gap between the policy and its implementation.

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency syndrome
AWC	Anganwadi Centre
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRC	Block Resource Centre (India)
CABE	Central Advisory Board of Education
CBSE	The Central Board of Secondary Education
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre (India)
CWSNs	Children with Special Needs
EC	European Commission
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EDI	Education Development Index
EFA	Education for All
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GoI	Government of India
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICSE	The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
MDG	Millennium Developmental Goals
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development (Government of India)
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training (India)
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCFTE	National Curriculum for Framework for Teacher Education
NCTE	National Council of Teacher Education
NER	National Enrolment Ratio
NFO	Non-Governmental Organization
n.d.	No date
NPE	National Policy on Education

n.p.	No page number
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OoSC	Out-of-school children
PIRLs	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
P-T ratio	Pupil-teacher ratio
PoA	Programme of Action
QMT	Quality Monitoring Tools, devised by NCERT, India
RTE	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education
SC	Scheduled Castes (India): Legal definition of those formerly known *dalit* or *harijan,* listed under India's 1950 Constitution as entitled to receive positive discrimination. The Schedule Castes comprise of approximately 16.6 percent of India's population (according to the 2011 census). SCs, along with Scheduled Tribes (ST), are historically among India's most marginalised cultural groups.
SMT	School Monitoring Format
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (India): Initiated in 2001-02 as the successor to the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).
ST	Schedule Tribes (India): Schedule Tribe communities listed under the Indian Constitution and forming about 8.6 percent of the country's total population (according to the 2011 census).
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (formerly Third International Mathematics and Science Study)
TLMs	Teaching and Learning Materials
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UEE	Universal Elementary Education
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WB	World Bank

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Since India's independence in 1947 there have been numerous policy interventions directed at improving the 'quality' aspect of education. These include the National Policy on Education 1968 (NPE, 1968); and its subsequent reforms in 1986 (NPE, 1986) and in 1992. In addition, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the "Education for All Movement" in 2001-02 was designed as an umbrella programme to address three Education For All[1] (EFA) goals – Access (Goal 2), Equity (Goal 5) and Quality (Goal 6) (UNESCO, 2015b: 4). Most recently, the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (henceforth, NCF-2005) was introduced to address the issue of quality in education (partly conceived of as performance in certain subjects as well as changes in pedagogy). These last three have been formulated to resonate with the EFA framework and India's Constitutional Amendment Acts[2].

This thesis will examine the key policy directions within NCF-2005 for quality aspects at the primary level. This level has been selected as a focus partly because it is the foundation of the whole education system. And secondly, due to the enormous number of dropouts after primary. The NCF-2005 focuses on four key issues: *Learning Without Burden*[3] by addressing curriculum load, while suggesting a reduction in the number of textbooks for pupils (NCF 2005: 2); promotion

[1] Education for All, was a movement initiated during the "World Education conference on Education for All" held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. However, the six measurable education goals for EFA were adopted by the World Education forum held in Dakar, Senegal, on 26-28 April 2000 (NUEPA, 2014: 2).

[2] "The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendments) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide for free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right" (NUEPA, 2014: 4).

[3] Learning Without Burden focuses on making learning a 'joyful experience' by moving away from textbooks while stressing on examination and redesigning of syllabus (NCF 2005: 2).

of universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years of age (PoA: 1992: 77, in NCF 2005, 4); child-centred approach to teaching and learning (PoA: 1992: 77, in NCF 2005: 4); and "substantial improvement in the quality of education in school" (NCF 2005: 4).

I will in my thesis focus on the last key issue where efforts invested into improving India's education system for quality aspects at the primary level, will be highlighted. I will do so by firstly enlisting the aims, objectives and progress made as highlighted in NCF-2005, the programme which was launched by the Government of India (Central Government) towards achieving the quality dimension of elementary education all over the country. Secondly, I will do a critical analysis of the NCF-2005 as a curriculum document. Lastly, in examining India as a case study, I will highlight how 'quality' in its full sense has not been achieved.

The statistical data in the EFA Global Monitoring Report for India and the Education for All 2015 National Review Report, reports that out of the six EFA goals, while Goal-2 and Goal-3 show improvement in results, Goals 1, 4 and 5 call for future intervention.

Table-1.1: Progress made by India towards the EFA goals

Goal-1 :	**Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCE):** **Gross-Enrolment Ratio (GER):** An increase in GER in pre-primary education from 18% in 1999 to 55% in 2010 observed (NUEPA, 2014: 18). 45% of children still remain out of pre-primary education.
Goal-2	**Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE):** Universal access: Schools imparting primary education: increased by 34.5% from 2000-01 to 2013-14 (NUEPA, 2014: 22). Universal enrolment: The GER in primary was reported to be 101.4% in 2013-14 from 95.7% in 2000-01 (*ibid:* 26). Out-of-school children (OoSC) in the age group 6-14 years: 4.28% in 2009-10 (*ibid:* 44) Universal retention: Dropout rate at the primary level has reduced from 40.7% to 24.9% between 2000-01 and 2008-09 (*ibid:* 46)
Goal-3	**Youth literacy rate (15-24 years):** Increased from 76.43% in 2001 (NUEPA, 2014: 6) to 89.65% in 2015 (Refer: UNESCO statistical website).

Goal-4	**Adult literacy rate:** **Age 7 years and above:** Improved from 64.84% to 72.49% between 2001 and 2011 (*ibid:* 65). **Age 15 years and above:** Although increased from 61% in 2001 (NUEPA, 2014: 68) to 72.13% in 2015, falls below the projected 100% literacy rate (Refer: UNESCO statistical website).
Goal-5	**Gender parity and equality in elementary education:** Interventions for gender parity at primary and upper-primary education is needed for improving enrolment of girls, which is at 48.2% and 48.6% (NUEPA, 2014: Figure 2.5.1: 74).
Goal-6	**Ensuring physical access and equity while improving all aspects of quality of education**

These are the key issues that have been taken up by the Indian government. However, in the Indian case, even though there have been necessary improvements, these have not been sufficient to attain Goal-6, the focus of this study.

1.2 Rationale and Purpose of the Study

This thesis analyses the area of actual curriculum reform for quality aspects at the primary (Grade I-V) level, both generally and specifically within India, in order to look at the quality aspect of education, which the NCF-2005 highlights as a key aim. This aspect has long been a focus of the Indian Government's Ministry of Human Resource Department (MHRD) and was reinforced in the 2015 EFA review report for India (NUEPA, 2014) which had as its theme "Towards Quality with Equity." Thus India has a firm resolve to focus on 'quality education' and to understand whether or not children's achievements are improving over time in an equitable manner.

In the absence of standard tests at the national level for primary grade in India other indicators, such as access to education, especially, for girls and rural children; retention rates; enrolment rates and literacy rates, especially amongst girls/women have become a standard method for measuring quality. However, if 'quality' can be seen as more than the sum of quantitative indicators which essentially measure 'equality' (see Gilmour, 2001 for example), and should embody qualitative factors such as pedagogy, texts and curriculum design (see Alexander, 2008

for example), then it is important to examine the NCF-2005 documentation in detail as well as its implementation.

1.3 Research questions

One key-question and two sub-questions assisted me in focusing the research process:

Key question:

- How does the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF-2005) address the 'quality' issue for primary education?

Sub questions:

- What are the definitions of 'quality' embedded in the national documents such as the SSA and NCF-2005?
- Are the proposed reforms advocated by the NCF-2005 for achieving quality education desirable and implementable?

1.4 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. **Chapter One** outlines the motivation for the study and identifies the key questions that drive this study. This chapter underlines the study's core objective which was to investigate the understanding of 'quality' as embedded in the NCF-2005 and to assess the intervening programmes for improving the quality of education.

Chapter Two outlines the background of the Indian education system. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the importance of crucial policy and planning routes taken in India. The key questions which will be explored are: firstly, how aligned are the Constitutional Acts and its successive amendments, the National Policy on Education-1986 (reformed in 1992) (NPE-1986/92), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (NCF-2005)? Secondly, what are the key objectives of the NPE-1986/92 policy document and the SSA

programme in the Indian education system? Thirdly, what aims and objectives does the NCF-2005 document underline for addressing 'quality' in education?

Chapter Three outlines the conceptual framework. In this context, the conceptual framework includes an analysis of the theoretical debates around the term 'quality'. The purpose of this chapter is to explore key questions: firstly, how has 'quality' been examined in international policy documents? Secondly, how does the policy document of India define 'quality' and are these usages inter-connected? Thirdly, what tools does the Indian Education National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) use for monitoring 'quality' education? And lastly, what are the causes of complexities associated with 'policy'? These questions and others are addressed in this chapter through a comprehensive literature review.

Chapter Four outlines the research design and methodology employed, and the motivation for these. It uses a document analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach and describes the theoretical framework developed, selection of certain documents and questions of validity. Lastly, limitations of the study have also been addressed.

Chapter Five provides an in-depth analysis of the policy text around the provision of quality education through the NCF-2005, while **Chapter Six** discusses the implications of the study.

Chapter Two: The Indian Education System: its Nature and Planning Directions

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline crucial features of the Indian education system and the various Constitutional Acts in order to provide a background to the current dispensation of the NCF-2005. This is crucial as the Constitutional Acts and their amendments were the cornerstones on which subsequent policy interventions – the NPE-1986/92, the NCF-2005, and planning directions- the SSA, were designed.

The legislation since 1950 has recognised education as a key intervention in solving issues in India (Naik, 1962: n.p.). The key issues in the Indian education system have been its low quality education system coupled with unequal access and participation rates, exclusion and consequently limited equity. There have been numerous Acts that have attempted to address these issues but despite this, in many respects these goals have not been obtained.

The key issues examined in this chapter are the significance of the various educational Acts and their amendments. This will then be followed by a brief discussion of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/92 and its relevance to the Education for All[4] (EFA) framework. Key features of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a national programmatic intervention for achieving 'quality' education will be delineated. Lastly, India's achievement towards the six EFA goals will be briefly discussed. The planning directions will examine the various measures put into place for facilitating provision of quality education. These points and others are addressed in this chapter through a comprehensive policy and programme document analysis.

[4] Education for All (EFA) is a programme formed with the commitment to provide for high-quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Initiated in 1990, the six specific educational goals for EFA were reconfirmed in April 2000. These goals were to be achieved by 2015.

2.2 Education: a fundamental right

At an official level, India's commitment to education is comparable to other nations. However, translating them into reality has had some challenges. India's commitment towards providing basic quality education for all was a goal first enshrined in the Indian Constitution since 1950. The key legislation in relation to quality inclusive education is discussed below in Table 2.1.

Table-2.1: Key changes that guided the development of education in India

Year	Constitutional Acts	Key feature	Key interventions/changes
1950	The original Article-45 present in the Directive Principle of State Policy.	This Article makes it mandatory on the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they reach fourteen years of age (National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) (NUEPA, 2014: 5).	Notwithstanding the progress made within ten years of its commencement, the Government reiterated its commitment to achieving universal elementary education.
1976	'Education' a shared responsibility between the Central Government and the States.		
1986 /92	NPE	Key salient features are: 1. Stressing the importance of 'education' for its citizens. 2. Setting up a National System of Education. 3. Promoting equality, quality and inclusive education and development amongst women, children with special needs and minority groups. 4. Facilitating adult education.	
2000	NCF-2000	It emphasises preserving the heterogeneity of the society by advocating for changes on the three pillars of 'relevance, equity and excellence'.	
2001 -02	SSA	A Centrally-sponsored flagship programme for universalisation of elementary education (UEE).	
2002	'86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002'. This inserted Article 21-A.	Article 21-A reiterated the goal of provision of "universal free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right", as enjoined by the State (NUEPA, 2014: 5).	
	Rewriting of Article-45 and the Introduction of Article-46 and Article 30[1]	The Constitution entrusts upon the State to provide ECCE until the age of six (NUEPA, 2014: 5).	It advocated for the rights of social, educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the society, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Minorities (NUEPA, 2014: 5).

			In all, by making education a Fundamental Right it was made legally enforceable on the State to provide for free and compulsory education (Chauhan, 2008: 232).
2005	NCF-2005	It emphasises the holistic development of the learner while aiming towards an equitable, inclusive and quality education system and society.	
2009	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 under Article 21-A came into force in India on 1 April 2010.	This Act further emphasised free and compulsory education for children between 6-14 years of age.	Key features of the RTE Act, 2009 are: 1. It makes it mandatory on the concerned governing bodies to make provision for inclusive education. 2. It specifies the duties and responsibilities of the Central Government, the State, local authorities and parents. Therefore, this Act makes provision of free and compulsory 'education' a shared responsibility until elementary education. 3. It delineates norms and standards for Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), working hours for teachers, school working days, and building and infrastructural development. 4. It advocates for the "development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution" and building a system that promotes child-friendly and child-centred learning. (NUEPA, 2014: 5-6).
2012	Amendment of RTE Act, 2009 in 2012 and bought to effect from 1 August 2012.	Key features *inter alia* of the RTE Act, 2012 are: 1. Inclusion of children with disability and providing them free and compulsory education. 2. Protecting rights of minorities. (NUEPA, 2014: 6).	

In all, successive amendments of the Acts provided additional clarity on the duties of the Central Government, the State, the local governing bodies and parents or guardians and added impetus to the Central Government's goal of the universalization of elementary education (UEE).

Therefore, to clarify the implications of the Acts discussed above, what follows is a brief description of: firstly, the importance of NPE-1986/92 in developing the Indian education system and its relevance to the EFA framework. And secondly, the relevance of policies formulated at the national level to those formulated at the international level, particularly towards achieving Goal-6 of the EFA framework.

2.3 The nature of the Indian education system

India has a federal structure comprising of 29 States and seven Union Territories (UTs) with diverse socio-cultural contexts and widely varying geographical conditions. It is the largest democracy in the world with a population of 1.21 billion (Census of India, 2011, in NUEPA, 2014: 1). Hence, the population size stresses the point that even 'small' changes will affect very large numbers of people. In addition, the country's significant cultural and linguistic diversity has implications for the nation's development and for its education system (UNESCO, 2014: 1).

The present Indian education system is broadly categorised into four stages of school education- the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary (NUEPA, 2014: 3). A national system of school education envisaged a 10+2+3 pattern for: firstly, for bringing uniformity into the school system. Secondly, ensuring mobility across States. Thirdly, for comparability with the rest of the world. And lastly, for making eight years of elementary education compulsory. This pattern originated from the recommendation of the Education Commission of 1964-66. It was adopted in 1977. While the 10+2 years of study is done in schools or colleges depending on the local condition, the remaining three years are done in colleges. The five years of primary and three years of upper primary constitutes the elementary stage of school. However, the pre-primary stage, which is a critical stage for laying the foundation for primary education, is currently not a part of the formal education structure (NUEPA, 2014: 3). Nevertheless, the government has established pre-schools and health-care facilities for children between 3-6 years for facilitating an easier transition to primary school level.

Table-2.2: The size and shape of school education in India 2013-2014

	Learners (millions)	OoSC 6-14 years (millions))	Gender		Teachers (millions)	Number of schools
			Boys (millions)	Girls (millions)		
Primary (Class I-V)	132.4	8.15	68.6	63.8	7.72	858916
Upper-primary (Class VI-VIII)	66.5		34.2	32.3		589796
Elementary (Class I-VIII)	198.8		102.8	96.1		1448712
Secondary (IX-X) and Higher-secondary (XI-XII)	59.6		31.5	28.1		237,111

Source: NUEPA, 2014

Having elaborated broadly on the structural pattern of the Indian education system, I will now discuss the policy documents that were formulated based on the various Constitutional Acts as well as the programmatic interventions for achieving quality primary education.

2.4 Key policy frameworks for education development

The following section traces policy development from the NPE 1986/92 to the NCF-2005. The purpose of this section is to highlight what measures were taken for making provision towards promoting quality education.

2.4.1 National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986/92

A key milestone in India's march towards achieving the goal of universalisation of elementary education was the adoption of the NPE-1986, which was followed by publication of the 'Programme of Action (PoA) 1986' for its implementation (Chauhan, 2009: 229). Also, India's educational goals and strategies were re-examined and were reframed in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (UNESCO, 2015b; 1). The NPE 1986 as modified in 1992 embraces a comprehensive view of UEE (Chauhan, 2009: 229). It emphasises that "up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, have access to education of comparative quality" (NUEPA, 2014: 6). Hence, it embraces inclusive education; adult, formal and non-formal; elementary education (up to 14 years of age) and early childhood care and education (ECCE). The policy document also argues for a "substantial improvement in the quality of education" (Chauhan, 2009: 229).

While the reform in 1992 of NPE-1986 was aimed at integrating the necessary actions vital for the development of various facets of education, the EFA programme, which is an international programme attracted special attention from 2000 onwards (Chauhan, 2009: 229). By formulating specific goals and targets, EFA acted as a 'catalyst' in initiating country specific programmes, SSA-2001-02, in member countries including India (Chauhan, 2009: 229). In all, while the EFA goals were not directly adopted by the National Policy of India, the aims and objectives of NPE resonated with the objectives of the EFA programme, while bearing the local context in mind. (The achievements in relation to the six EFA goals can be seen in Appendix-1).

A programmatic intervention for the universalization of elementary education and fostering quality education was initiated. This was the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The section that follows delineates certain crucial features of the SSA that looks into quality education at the primary level. Also, how this intervention addresses provision of 'quality education' has been highlighted.

2.4.2 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Post-1992, with the reform of NPE 1986, achieving universalization of elementary education (UEE) gained further impetus. A number of schemes/programmes were launched, some particularly for upper primary education (MHRD, 2004: 1.1.2). Key amongst them was the single umbrella[5] programme, the SSA initiated in 2001-02 by the Central Government for achieving UEE. It was an endeavour towards filling the vacuum for quality improvement in elementary education, while incorporating all the districts in the country (MHRD, 2004: 1.1.2). Although it is a Centrally sponsored programme, the scheme is implemented in partnership with State/UT Governments (NUEPA, 2014: 9).

The key goals of SSA are: (i) universal access and retention of children in school; (ii) bridging gender, regional and social gaps at elementary educational levels; and (iii) elementary education of satisfactory quality (MHRD, 2004: 1.1.5; NUEPA, 2014: 9). These goals were linked to time-bound targets and similar to EFA goals 2, 5 and 6, were adopted by the SSA (UNESCO, 2015b: 4). It is crucial to address here that SSA was designated as the primary vehicle for realising the provisions contained in the RTE Act 2009 (NUEPA, 2014: 50). This collaborative effort assisted in facilitating quality education through increased access, enrolment, and retention.

[5] The SSA covers other education programmes like District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish and Operation Blackboard (MHRD, 2004: 1.1.1).

Table 2.3 below shows the enrolment and dropout rates for SSA schools.

Table-2.3: Progress as reported under the SSA programme

Grades	Enrolment	Drop-Out Rates (%)		Number of schools
Primary (I-V)	129,992	36.3	47.4	790,640
Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	65,780			401,079
Secondary (IX-X)	36,961			131,287
Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	22,153	No data		102,558

(*Refer:* MHRD, 2014: 4, 8)

Nevertheless, SSA demands further attention as issues related to access, equity and quality education still remain. For example, as the table shows, 36.3% of learners' dropout between elementary and secondary levels, and 47.4% dropout between secondary and senior secondary school.

2.4.2.1 Provision of quality education under SSA

The onset of SSA added impetus towards improving quality and efficiency at the school and/or classroom level through the provision of "'satisfactory quality' [education] in achieving the goal of education for all" (MHRD, 2004: 4.2.0.1, my parentheses). The various initiatives taken are monitored by an appraisal team[6]. They assess from both a long- and short-term perspective, the success of crucial components that affect quality education (MHRD, 2004: 4.2.0.1). Components

[6] The appraisal team consists of representatives of Government of India who are approved by the Project Approval Board headed by Secretary (EE &L), Government of India.

delineated by the SSA for quality improvements within schools and/or classrooms settings are as follows (MHRD, 2004: 4.2.0.2):

(a) “Vision of Quality Elementary Education
(b) Curriculum Renewal Plan
(c) Teaching Learning Material (including textbooks)
(d) Teacher Training - perspective and annual plan / calendar
(e) Teaching-Learning Process
(f) Academic Resource Support Structure
(g) Monitoring of Quality Aspects”

Hence, it can be inferred that the SSA advocates for curriculum renewal, while applying the guiding principles of the “National Curriculum Framework on one hand and incorporating the State's vision of quality elementary education on the other” (MHRD, 2004: 4.2.2.3). It rightly argues that the curriculum followed in schools is an important determinant and one of the direct ways of promoting quality education (*ibid:* 4.2.2.1). Moreover, a revision of curriculum directly requires adjustments suitable for learners coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Hence, the SSA focuses on decentralising the curriculum to make it relevant and specific to the local context. Nevertheless, because both teachers and districts are under-prepared or not trained, this continues to be a challenge at the district level for integrating district specific elements (*ibid:* 4.2.2.3). Hence, the document argues for “review, reform and renewal” of the curriculum under such contexts for promoting quality education (MHRD, 2004: 4.2.2.2). Given their, for effective implementation of the curriculum the SSA advocates effective planning that incorporates target groups, teachers and training institutes at the different levels.

In the section that follows, one of the key methods for providing quality education - the curriculum, as argued in the SSA and the EFA 2015 review document, is highlighted.

2.4.3 The National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF-2005)

Since the renewal of NPE-1986, efforts had been invested towards establishing a national system of education within the NPE-1986's broad framework. Furthermore, decentralisation of the curriculum for increased specificity to the local context, is what SSA advocates. Hence, NCF-2005 prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) aims at doing just that. NCF-2005 outlines broad principles for States and UTs to follow while designing the detailed syllabus, textbooks and making appropriate teaching-learning materials available in schools from early childhood to the higher secondary stage of education (NUEPA, 2014: 87).

According to this report, NCF-2005 aims at building a system and schools that are "child-friendly and inclusive" (NUEPA, 2014: 87). Crucial goals of the NCF-2005, apart from those outlined in Chapter 1 are:

- It advocates innovative pedagogic practices, rather than a top-down approach, for making learning an exciting experience (p. 41).
- It aims at eliminating gender and caste biases by proposing that teachers design lessons that are gender and caste sensitive. This has been demonstrated by providing an example of "Talking Pictures" (p.25).
- It recommends the promotion of inclusive education and flexibility of assessment methods (pp.71-72).
- It argues for incorporating design features into the curriculum that would assist educators with organising classroom teaching in consonance with the child's milieu.
- It advocates designing curriculum on the principles of NCF-2005 for reflecting the commitment to Universal Elementary Education (UEE) (p.5).
- The NCF-2005 aims to bring about a significant shift in the teaching and learning processes by advocating for a 'constructivist approach', which is responsive to each child's need (p.17).

(NCF 2005)

This last goal which aims at adopting a constructivist approach to teaching-learning processes responsive to each child's need is central to the reform (NUEPA, 2014: 87), and a key part of moving away from the 'textbooks and tests' which previously described the NCF-2000.

The educational aims, identified by NCF-2005, as outlined in the EFA 2015 National Review report document also outlines crucial social values that learners should learn. They are firstly, a commitment towards developing equality, justice, respect for human dignity, freedom, democratic values, secularism and rights and concern for the well-being of others. Secondly, being flexible in responding to new situations by displaying willingness to unlearn and relearn. And lastly, developing aesthetic skills (NUEPA, 2014: 87).

Consequently textbooks, syllabus, pedagogic practices and assessment frameworks were designed based on these guidelines embedded in the NCF-2005. This was done at the Central Government level in order to facilitate curriculum reform at the State level. NCF-2005 acknowledges the diversity of the Indian context and insists upon "a menu of quality curricula packages be developed" instead of one textbook for all in a particular State (NUEPA, 2014: 87). It is crucial to highlight here that the NCF-2005 is not mandatory for the various States to follow. Nevertheless, curriculum and textbooks developed by the NCERT in light of the NCF is followed directly in 15 States and UTs while 14 states and UTs use modified versions of the NCERT curriculum, syllabus and textbooks (Dhawan, 2013: n.p.). Given that there are 457.3 million learners and 1,448,712 schools the enormity and complexity of this task is readily apparent and is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

Nonetheless the broad parameters associated with NCF-2005 discussed above remain and will be more fully discussed with particular reference to primary schools in Chapter 5.

2.6 Conclusion

Having delineated key developments that guided the development of education in India; I would like to reiterate that the various Constitutional Acts were crucial for progress in education as were developments such as the NPE-1986/92 and the SSA programme which were significant for changes made towards providing basic and quality education.

The discussions above provide an insight on the key aspects in legislation, from 1950 to 2012 for improving issues around retention, inclusivity, quality, formal and non-formal education, adult education and universalising elementary education between 6-14 years of age for children. And while there have been improvements in key Goal-2 and Goal-3 there are still major difficulties around retention with high drop rates. And even for the SSA programme, specifically designed to address the above issues we are still seeing high dropout rates from elementary to secondary (36.3%) and from secondary to higher secondary (47.4%). Hence, the government is faced with a difficulty position of having to simultaneously deal with the issue of access (which on one level is a technical issue) and curriculum reform which was designed for better quality learning.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, the various definitions used to define 'quality' in international and national documents will be delineated. Also, the causal relationship between misinterpretation of policy texts and formation of gaps and spaces will be highlighted. This in turn, will further elaborate on the causes of the complexity associated with the policy process.

Chapter Three: The 'Quality' Problem

3.1 Introduction

Although the provision of 'quality education' is advocated and promoted at international and the national level there is much contestation and many theoretical debates surrounding the definition of 'quality' amongst various agencies. These include the European Commission (EC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through the EFA programme and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2014).

This chapter is organised into two sub-sections. The first sub-section involves an in-depth look at international frameworks for quality and its influence on national policy for India. This will be done through a review of the programme launched by the Central government. The second sub-section examines the possible impact of policies by applying Ball (1993) and Trowler's (2003) analytic perspectives on analysing policy processes at the international level. This will be used as a guide for understanding the cause of complexity in the term 'policy'. Also highlighted will be contesting views and ideologies at the formulation stage that affect desired outcomes.

These sub-sections are used to develop theoretical lenses which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. With curriculum reform as one of the indicators for the provision of quality education by the Central Government, the theoretical lens developed, will assist in delineating the successes and/or limitations of the national curriculum policy document, specifically for the primary level.

3.2 Defining 'quality'

3.2.1 Perspectives on 'quality' from the international literature

Quality is a widely contested issue in education and as Sayed (1997) puts it, the concept 'quality' is elusive. It is frequently used but never addressed in a manner that would reflect different "ideological, social and political values" (Sayed, 1997, in Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 2). Also, the term 'quality' has been widely argued and controlled by those who "operate in the domain of policy, accountability and funding rather than in the arena of practice" (Alexander, 2008: 3).

Barrett *et. al.* (2006) in this review of policy documents usefully argue that there are two broad approaches to understanding quality: firstly, the humanist approach. This approach pays greater emphasis to educational processes i.e. how teaching and learning takes place within classrooms, and the holistic development of the child - areas which are difficult to measure (Beeby, 1966). And secondly, the economist approach which is largely concerned with quantitative measurable outputs (Barrett *et. al.*, 2006: 2). These measurable outputs are usually "enrolment ratios… retention rates, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievements as measured in national or international tests" (Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 2; see also Figure 4.1: 43). In addition, the second approach has been identified with the World Bank (WB) which justifies its education loans in relation to financial returns (Jones, 1992, in Barrett *et. al.,* 2006: 3).

While these two approaches are not mutually exclusive and while the EFA does include a "broad range of personal and social learning outcomes" (Barrett *et. al.*, 2006*: iii*), the assessment of achieving quality has largely been restricted to those "cognitive learning outcomes that are easy to measure using pen and paper tests" (Barrett *et. al.*, 2006: *iii*). Similarly, Alexander (2008) commenting on the EFA Global Monitoring Report discourse argues that the discourses do not discuss quality in its real sense. He contends that 'quality' has been "defined in terms of outcomes rather than processes" (Alexander, 2008: 6). These contested discussions and/or views are discussed below.

As noted in policy documentation, the meaning of the term 'quality' has often been studied in terms of how it can be measured rather than how it can be conceived in its actual sense. That is why 'indicators' have come to occupy a central place in the discourse on quality (Alexander, 2008: 6). Alexander (2008) refers to this as adjective vs. noun. Through the 'adjective' form of quality he refers to the readily quantifiable forms of 'quality' in education, which is represented in the form of 'indicators'. This area has been dominated primarily in the policy and market arena. Similarly, through the 'noun' form of quality, he refers to "attributes, characteristics or property" such as, 'high' or 'low' quality that cannot be easily quantified (p.11).

For example, a few "world education indicators" delineated in the OECD (2014) document are: the Output of Educational Institutions and the Impact of Learning; Access to Education, Participation and Progression; Financial and Human Resources Invested in Education; and The Learning Environment and Organization of School. These indicators provide a broad framework of quality, which can be elaborated further. For example, indicators with respect to 'Impact of learning', 'access' and 'learning environment are: completion rate of upper-secondary and tertiary education for students, teaching and learning time and pupil-teacher ratios (P-T ratio). In this model the focus is on inputs and outcomes but it does not capture the noun form of quality, that is the processes (the humanist approach).

A similar pattern is seen in the EC (2000) list of quality indicator. They are (Alexander, 2008): firstly, Attainment, which is inclusive of, "Mathematics, Reading, Science, ICT, Foreign languages, learning to learn, Civics" (2008: 4). Secondly, Success and transition, which is inclusive of, "Dropout rates, Completion of upper secondary education and Participation in tertiary education" (2008: 4). Thirdly, monitoring of education, which is inclusive of, "Evaluation and steering of school education and Parental participation" (2008: 4). And lastly, Resources and structures, which circumscribes, "Education and training of teachers, Participation in pre-primary education, Numbers of students per computer and Educational expenditure per student" (2008: 4). Alexander (2008) rightly argues that the EC quality indicators are "construed as input and outcome with process nowhere to be seen" (2008: 4). Where 'processes' such as, competent

teachers, active pedagogical practices, assessments, class size and learning time are considered there arises obvious measurement or conceptual issues. These include the wash back effect of pedagogical practices reverting back to teaching to the test kind of educational practices. This results in aiming towards the holistic development of the learner suffering limitations.

A further drive towards the economistic model has been the increasing marketisation of education. As Sayed argues, this has resulted in quality being defined in terms of "efficiency, value for money and meeting the demands of 'educational consumers'" (Sayed, 1997 in Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 5).

By contrast, Barrett *et.al*. (2006) argue that judgement of quality based on what happens in schools and in the classroom requires a wider approach[7]. These approaches are developing cognitive skills, learning literacy and numeracy, general knowledge and attitudes and cultural values. This results in notions of democratic school governance, learner-centred pedagogies and inclusive education entering quality education (p.2). However, literacy and numeracy have been given precedence over other subjects due to international testing (p.2).

It should be noted that despite this focus on Quantitative variables, as far back as 1996, the Delors Report, containing UNESCO's vision for a global education, developed a frame which did account for process variables. It delineates four important pillars of education which essentially contains UNESCO's vision for a global education. They are: "Learning to know; Learning to do; Learning to live together; and Learning to be" (pp.20-21). This report accounts for different aspects of education. They are: firstly, developing an understanding of others and their surroundings. Secondly, knowledge as means and as an end for the possibility of lifelong education. Thirdly,

[7] For instance, recommending teachers to design content for developing cognitive skills of learners, has been adopted at the national level by the Indian government's MHRD as outlined by Barrett *et.al.*(2006). Hence, curriculum reform plan, being a crucial factor for addressing quality, specifically at the classroom level, and previous studies not having delved deeper into this aspect. This further compelled me to concentrate on curriculum reform strategies.

developing competency and aptitude for teamwork. And lastly, development of individual potential. Hence, the Delors report (1996) underlines all of the skills that are essential for enabling a child to enter the labour market and for personal development. The above mentioned four pillars, on which the UNESCO reports are based, are included in the Education for All 2015 National Review Report document of India.

This change in discourse had also appeared in World Bank documents where, "'Quality' has taken the place of 'improvement'. Although 'quality' still defined in terms of learner achievement, the definition of what is to be achieved has been refined. This has been done in a direction that reflects international EFA documents. This document argues that: "The long-term goal in education is nothing less than to ensure everyone completes a basic education of adequate quality, acquires foundation skills—literacy, numeracy, reasoning and social skills such as teamwork—and has further opportunities to learn advanced skills throughout life, in a range of post-basic education settings" (Human Development Network, 2002: 431 in Barrett *et. al.*, 2006: 7). The World Bank has continued to invest in primary education since the 1990s and has "criticised programmes for measuring quality in terms of inputs (infrastructure, textbooks, and so on) and outputs (e.g. number of teachers trained) and not giving enough emphasis to learning outcomes (measurable improvements in learner's cognitive achievement)" (Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 8). This highlights the shift in studies towards outcomes as indicators of quality education and also illustrates how despite the rhetoric, the process elements are side-lined. Perhaps the most important document is the EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2005 which specifically focussed on the need for quality alongside quantity. This is discussed below.

3.2.2 The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) Education for All: The Quality Imperative

The 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report focuses on the quality of education and assesses progress made towards the EFA goals. In moving towards an understanding of quality the report outlines various philosophical positions in order to clarify the debate. Various philosophies

guiding the meaning of the term 'quality' have their roots in different traditions of educational thought. Locke and Rousseau who followed a humanistic tradition assert that all people are born equal and subsequent inequality is a product of circumstances (UNESCO, 2004: 32). This train of thought has impacted eminent theorists, such as, John Dewey and Jean Piaget who encouraged active and participatory roles for children through a constructivist approach (p.32). An approach converse to the above is behaviourist theory (UNESCO, 2004: 33). This argues that human behaviour can be moulded, predicted and controlled through reward and response (e.g. tests and examination). Nonetheless, very few educational theorists have been influenced by behaviourist theory, such as Ivan Pavlov and Burrhus. F. Skinner (UNESCO, 2004: 33). However, elements of this philosophy of learning can be observed for many countries[8] in teacher-training programme, curricula and classroom instruction (p.33).

The humanist approach to understanding quality education is applicable to my area of study as it addresses the issue of the importance of quality primary education. Also, it has been explored to a relatively lesser extent. Furthermore, the guiding principles of the NCF-2005 takes a humanistic stance for the overall development of the child. It is crucial to address here that the Central Government through curriculum reform strategy aims at enabling children to "make sense of life and develop their potential… [for] pursuing a purposeful life while recognising the right of others to do so" (NCF 2005: 2, my parentheses). Hence, the above approach directly addresses the issue that I will be exploring further in my research.

Notably, there are some alternative thoughts on education that emphasise self-reliance, equality and rural employability from Gandhi and Nyerere[9]. The education philosophy of Gandhi described education as an important tool for self-development of an individual in three areas,

[8] The NCF-2005 document has Gandhian philosophies at the core of its planning (NCF 2005: 3). Hence, this calls for future attention which will be addressed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

[9] Julius Kambarage Nyerere served as the first president of Tanzania. His articulation of political, social and economic rhetoric embodied African values.

social, political and spiritual (Dasgupta, 1996: 136-138). On the other hand, the school of thought that Nyerere advocated for aimed at social welfare initiatives. The principle has an egalitarian approach to wealth distribution, political stability and a strong sense of national unity (Eve B. St-Cyr in *Synonym*, n.d.).

From this review, the 2005 EFA report outlines three principles for examining 'quality' in light of various approaches stated above. The first recognizes learners' cognitive development as the important indicator and the second emphasises "education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development" (UNESCO, 2004: 17). Behind these lie a third set of systemic indicators such as, public spending on education, P-T ratio, teacher qualification, mastery of curriculum by educators, teacher absenteeism and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This approach is used by a number of countries such as India, Mauritius, Uganda, and South Africa to a greater extent for ascertaining quality education.

The report provides a comprehensive framework for encompassing issues of access, process and outcomes around educational quality. The various variables influencing mapping out key policies for improving teaching and learning process are (UNESCO, 2004: 35-37):

- Learner characteristics: which includes, aptitude, perseverance, school readiness, prior knowledge and barriers to learning.
- Context: includes societal values and attitudes, economic status, national policies on goals and standards and curriculum and teachers.
- Inputs: includes teaching and learning, which in turn depends on human resources (teachers, principals) and material resource (textbooks, learning materials, classroom, libraries, and school facilities) and school governance.
- Outcomes: expressed in terms of measurable learning objectives, such as examination and tests performance as well as social and economic gains (Creative and emotional skills, Values, Social benefits).

The report also highlights important factors based on research evidence that determine educational quality, which, in turn, assists in designing policies ensuring better learning (p.39). The factors identified were (Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 10-11):

- Cognitive achievements: linking cognitive gains from basic education, by protection against HIV/AIDS, and international achievement tests and national exit exams (p.10).
- Pupil/Teacher ratio
- Teacher education and experience
- Teacher salary
- School effectiveness through strong leadership, secure school and classroom environment
- Instructional time
- Education spending

Nevertheless, the report ignores how teaching and learning take place inside the classroom as one of the factors for ensuring quality education and it downplays the humanist tradition.

In all, we are often seeing how these elements are over-ridden, often by the exam imperative which is more of a reward stimulus approach to education. This further drives down into the curriculum and pedagogy via teach to the test, crammed schools, and chalk-and-talk methods. While we have noble goals on one hand, the interface between the schooling system, the further education system and the labour market is dysfunctional to the degree to that employers use exams as a major selection mechanism. Hence, exams become high stake which then impacts on the teaching in later years of school in particular. And if progress from secondary (grade-10) to higher-secondary (grade-11) level is also based, as in India, on exams then there is a further backwash effect down the primary system. Therefore, even if we accept that higher levels of the education system will be specialised and focused on specific subjects, in the primary level of the foundations, we are also seeing examination pressure which is likely to counteract all these other humanistic goals. Hence, the significance of defining quality in a specific way, in turn, highlights the importance of addressing teaching and learning as a crucial factor in achieving quality education.

The report also highlights key policy interventions for improving teaching and learning in collaboration with key actors. Greater emphasis towards improvement has been placed on formal school effectiveness. Certain sections requiring future interventions are (UNESCO, 2004; Barrett *et. al*., 2006: 11):

- Learners (as they are the heart of teaching and learning): through a further emphasis on good inclusive approach and alternatives to formal education (pp. 143-146).
- Teaching and Learning: focusing on appropriate goals for the curriculum, appropriate approach to effective pedagogy, developing relevant content, sound assessment, effective learning time, careful choice of language (pp.146-160).
- Better teachers: through teacher training, improved salaries and teacher recruitments (pp.161-168).
- Better schools: better leadership and greater autonomy (pp.168-177).
- Combating corruption, improved accountability and professional association.

The report also outlines priorities for action suited for resource-constrained countries. These include “school effectiveness; strong partnership among government departments responsible for early childhood care and education; literacy and health; and a higher national spending on basic education.” (Barrett *et. al.*, 2006: 11).

A striking and fundamental corrective that surfaces from the 2005 EFA Report is that “quantity and quality in education are complements rather than substitutes” (Alexander, 2008: 10). This represents a major step forward. However, readily measurable indicators were to a large extent used for defining quality. This resulted in quality being defined in terms of quantity. Aligned with this idea, the Report contends that “Countries that are farthest from achieving goals 1 to 5 [comprising of quantitative measures] are also farthest from achieving goal 6 [comprising of qualitative indicators]" (UNESCO, 2004: 16, my parentheses). The issue that remains is, why is this quantitative approach pursued? Fundamentally the answer lies in the very complexity of the idea of ‘quality’. This is discussed below.

3.2.3 The complexities at the heart of 'quality'

As discussed above, the international literature addresses quality with respect to indicators. These indicators have rephrased what quality actually means. While earlier models concentrated on inputs and outcomes, the introduction of 'process' into the system by organisations, such as, the World Bank and the 2005 EFA Quality Imperative report, has resulted in further complicating what quality entails by addressing it in a very vague manner. Hence, the inclusion of process into measuring quality caused only those factors to be studied that could be easily measured and accounted for.

Nevertheless, later developments, such as the 2005 EFA Quality Imperative report discusses the term 'quality' in greater depth. It incorporates context, input, process and outcomes but does not describe the various dimensions of education quality. This, in turn, opens space for wide interpretation by ground actors resulting in contesting views and opinions. In addition, as Alexander (2008: 10) argues incorporation of process for ensuring quality education in some way or the other really reflects inputs or contextual variables. One of the major concerns of using indicators in order to account for quality by international organisations, such as, the UNESCO and the WB, as argued by Alexander (2008: 21) is that it advocates a standard method of promoting quality, which is to be reported by member countries (203). This remains true irrespective of the context.

Conceptually and more importantly, very few references have been made about curriculum reform and its relevance to quality. The 2005 EFA Report mentions curriculum reform very broadly, just as a pointer, with very little specificity. Similarly, UNESCO and the WB mention curriculum reform as the base on which the success of a country's education system depends. But how this is to be achieved has no mention. Furthermore, its exact definition and what it should contain has not been delineated. Consequently, the various indicators do not demand curriculum reform to be directly enacted. It is precisely the area of actual curriculum reform that this thesis analyses in order to move more closely to an assessment of quality.

To do this I return to Alexander's (2008) argument of defining quality in its totality, by taking both its 'noun' and 'adjective' form. Alexander through this argues that by giving precedence to the 'adjective' form of quality such as, "'quality education' or 'quality imperative' where quality implies a standard or level of quality to be desired" particularly in the policy and market arena, results in precedence of indicators of the standard or level of quality to be desired (Alexander, 2008: 11). Through the 'noun' form of 'quality' in education Alexander (2008) refers, "to… either an attribute [such as, 'teaching quality'], property, or characteristic in which case it is value neutral, or it can mean a degree of excellence, as in 'high' or indeed 'low' quality" (Alexander, 2008: 11). This definition of Alexander (2008) encompasses political definitions, bureaucratic and administrative decisions as well as global and educational definitions.

In India a key tool for measuring quality is the Quality Monitoring Tool (QMT) designed by the Indian educational board, the National Council of Educational Research and Training[10] (NCERT), for implementing quality education. This is discussed below.

3.2.4 The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Quality Monitoring Tools (QMT)

A more comprehensive and ambitious approach to indicator-based framework in India is provided by the NCERT in conjunction with the Central Government's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). This framework defines educational quality and outlines instruments or 'quality monitoring tools' (QMTs). The revised QMTs provide a comprehensive indicator-based framework for defining educational quality and sets of instruments or "quality monitoring tools" for application at different levels:

[10]National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an autonomous organisation set up in 1961 by the Government of India to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.

- School
- Cluster[11]
- Block[12]
- District and
- State

The QMTs were an ambitious approach to ensuring quality at the five levels thus, illustrating the process as "local and highly specific", mapped out during 2005-06 (Alexander, 2008: 12). The quality facet of elementary education is supervised by NCERT under the SSA programme (NCERT, 2013: *i*). The revised QMTs comprise of seven simplified formats for monitoring quality education. One amongst them is the "School Monitoring Format (SMF)" (NCERT, 2013: 1; Refer Appendix-4). The key quality dimensions for improving quality of elementary education incorporated under these formats are (NCERT, 2013: *i*):

- "children's attendance;
- community support and participation;
- teacher and teacher preparation;
- curriculum and Teaching and Learning Materials;
- classroom processes; and
- learners' assessment, monitoring and supervision."

[11]The Central Government has adopted a multi-tiered approach for different levels from schools through to States for monitoring provision of quality education under the SSA. At the Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) coordinators consolidate the school level format that is filled up at the school level. Based on the information collected on school activities; the CRC coordinator provides necessary feedback for the improvement of the schools and teachers (NCERT, 2013: *vi*).

[12]The format from the Cluster Resource Centre's (CRCs) are sent to the Block Resource Centre (BRC). This format is analysed and necessary feedback provided to the CRCs (NCERT, 2013: *vii*).

The QMT framework thus incorporates elements of input, context, process and outcomes (Alexander, 2008: 12). Yet, confusion at the heart of educational quality based on indicators remains. In accord with Alexander (2008: 10), "where direct measures are not available, proxies are used; and the proxies for process quality tend to be, again, outcomes or inputs." As the document shows (Refer Appendix-4) readily measurable indicators have led to quality being defined in terms of quantity. Alexander (2008) argues that one of the major drawbacks of this is that the educational quality indicators are seldom justified by reference to research. A critical analysis on the QMTs delineating its strengths and/or weaknesses appears in Chapter 5.

Hence, having outlined the difficulties around the term 'quality' at the national and international level; I will now highlight the effect of these contestations on the formulation-implementation-reformulation process of the policy cycle.

3.3 Analysing policy

The focus of this chapter around 'quality' is related to Trowler (2003), Ball's (1993, 2015) and Lall's (2007) argument on policy as a 'mish-mash' of contesting views and ideas. These views will set up a framework of enquiry which will act as a guide in the organisation of my analysis.

Education policy is often characterised as a highly contested field that is dynamic and subjected to multiple interpretations (Trowler, 2003). The question then raised is "whose values are validated in policy, and conversely, whose are not?" (Ball, 2012 in Omercajic, 2015: 12). The linking of this process with various ideologies influences how policy-formulation and implementation unfold. These ideologies often influence policy outcomes. Moving further, 'implementation' involves the linking of a problem to the solution. This could result in either achieving the desired outcomes or further aggravating the problem. This ineffective linking, often a consequence of limited resources, inadequate funding, and/or qualified support by either parties, impacts on the successful implementation of policy. This creates a policy 'gap', often

referred to as the policy implementation gap. In all, 'policy' as a definition, is vast and subjectively ambiguous; it is immensely dependent on the context in which one is using the term.

In order to understand why 'policy' is subjectively ambiguous, the lenses used by Trowler, 2003; Ball, 1993, 2015; and Lall, 2007 who have applied different analytical tools to study policy processes are discussed below. Trowler (2003) applies "policy encoding and policy decoding" as an analogy to study the policy processes. Ball (1993) applies "policy as text and policy as discourse" to understand policy, and Lall (2007) highlights how policies reflect competing interests as they move into practice.

Trowler (2003: 97) applies "policy encoding" and "policy decoding" as an analytical tool for studying policy process. He argues that policy-making comprises of three essential steps at the national level. They are: firstly, identifying the context of the issue or problem. Secondly, mobilizing fine structures of government action. And lastly, coming to agreements in the face of dilemmas and trade-offs (Rein, 1983: 211, in Trowler, 2003: 96). The necessity of designing a new policy requires a problem or issue requiring immediate attention. After defining the problem area and outlining the type of policy discussion, the respective government bodies begin with the policy formulation process. The final stage of the policy making process is a complex and non-linear process where "compromises between multiple agendas and influences" of the policy makers intervene (Trowler, 2003: 98). This in turn intervenes with the course of policy-formulation. Therefore, policy encoding is a dynamic process of "negotiation, compromise and exercise of power" where designing of policy seldom takes place with a clear purpose in mind (p.98).

Conversely, the policy decoding process (2003: 97: Figure 3.1), as argued by Trowler (2003), looks into the perspective of the policy implementers who selectively interpret policy and put it into practice in their own context. Trowler (2003) argues that irrespective of different tools applied by government and/or the stakeholders, effective implementation is hindered. This results in policy 'gaps'. He argues that these gaps result due to policies being designed either accidentally

or out of political necessity (2003: 105). He argues that how policies work in the practical world is often unpredictable. Trowler (2003) states that the process of transmission of policy statement to the implementers (e.g. teachers) is often problematic. For instance, either the policy documents are not available or are made available too late resulting in insufficient time allocated for reading and providing constructive feedback (Figure 3.1: 97). In addition, the implementers misread the policy text and interpret it in their own context thereby affecting desired result, causing policy-practice gap. Therefore, the "noise"-multiple agenda, attitude, values and sets of meaning, interferes with policy "signal"- desired manner of interpretation (Trowler, 2003: Fig. 3.1: 97). Hence, this affects the processes of coordinated change at the national and organizational level.

A crucial argument that Trowler (2003) makes is that sometimes gaps between policy processes occur due to the "inherently paradoxical nature" of the policy text (Trowler, 2003: 112). Such paradoxes result due to the complex and contradictory nature of policy texts. For instance, "the enterprise-traditionalism paradox" (advocacy for increased requirement for education and training versus an old-fashioned national curriculum along with traditional teaching practices) (Trowler, 2003: 118). Or "the widening participation while increasing financial obstacles to learning paradox" (i.e. increasing the participation for lifelong learning versus abolishment of grants for students and contribution towards universities fees) (Trowler, 2003: 119). Contradictions of these kinds affect change in an uncoordinated manner.

Ball, similarly, outlines two interpretations of policy: the notion of "policy as text" and "policy as discourse" (Ball, 1993:44). When conceptualising policy as text, Ball (1993) states that policy texts are outcomes of "multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas" (Ball, 1993:45). He argues that these texts are encoded in a complex manner due to "struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations" by those who question, intervene and react to policy text (Ball, 1993: 44). Furthermore, actors based on their understanding, skills, resources, and contexts decode policy text in complex ways (p.44). Such influences obscure the meaning of policy text entailing in "public confusion and a dissemination of doubt" (Ball, 1993: 45).

Furthermore, this results in opening up of gaps and spaces for action and response due to repeated interpretation of policy text. Hence, Ball (1993) argues that policy is text that gets affected, deflected and inflected by social inequalities, as it is dependent on "commitment, understanding, capability, resources, practical limitations, co-operation and (importantly) inter-textual compatibility" (Ball, 1993: 46).

Additionally, through policy as discourse, Ball (1993: 48), presents the debates around policy by actors who exhibit power by being influential. Policy discourse creates a framework of sense and obviousness with which policy is thought, spoken and written about (p.44). Ball (2003) argues that it is through discourse that tasks are accomplished. He maintains that the inception and legitimization of discourses takes place through certain institutions, such as the State. During the process of policy implementation, discourse can be both- an instrument and an effect of power, in addition, a hindrance and a point of starting an opposing strategy (p.49).

Hence, with this conceptualization, Ball (1993: 43) advocates for a diversity of approaches for doing policy analysis with all its "*complexity* and *scope".* He contends that for doing so one needs a "toolbox of diverse concepts and theories", in order to make sense of the policy process (Ball, 1993: 43). Through 'complexity' Ball (1993) refers to the ambiguous nature of policy texts resulting due to compromise between contesting parties. By 'scope' Ball (1993) refers to the accumulation of macro-level analysis of education policy and education system and micro level analysis of people's perception and experience. Ball (1993) contends that the movement of policy within the state differs as it is represented differently by different actors. This causes policy's purpose to be re-worked and re-oriented resulting in "gaps and spaces for action and response that are opened-up and re-opened" (Ball, 1993: 45). Hence, Ball (1993: 51) while opposing a single level analysis, suggests a policy trajectory studies as a cross-sectional analytical strategy, as this traces policy formulation, struggle and response from within the state through to the different recipients.

Nevertheless, Evans, Davies and Penney (1994) apply a different lens to Ball's theory and argue that policy as discourse "with its notion of constraints" and policy as text "emphasis[es] human agency as texts [who] are invariably the product of those who write them" (Lall, 2007: 6, my parentheses). Also, Lall (2007: 6) argues that Ball's theory does not account for nation states who are adapting themselves to the process of globalization.

Moving forward, Lall (2007) highlights how policies, particularly in case of developing nations gets influenced by international sphere due to globalization. She argues that specific interests are privileged when policy moves into practice (p. *v*). In agreement with Ball and colleagues (1992 in Lall, 2007: 4), Lall contends that policy text themselves are "products of compromises and power struggle" between actors. (2007: 5).

Lall (2007) relates education policy studies on one hand to "social justice, inclusion and [the] fight against discrimination" and to "efficiency, effectiveness and quality" on the other (Lall, 2007: vi). According to Lall (2007:1) education policy studies are related to "wider aspects of politics, power and influence". It emanates either from international and national spheres or are 'borrowed' primarily from western countries (2007: 2). Lall (2007: 3-4) succinctly outlines the difference between "state controlled" and "state-centred" policy formulation method. She shows how state controlled models designate all power to the state for policy making whereas state-centred makes policy which gives state the central position while also acknowledging other influences. Through this she highlights the steady move from singular focus on the role of the state towards more complex governance processes during policy making (Læssøe *et. al.*, 2013: 235). In all, Lall (2007) delineates shifted views from policies as logical structures to a complex social practice "constructed through discursive struggles and compromises that are open for multiple interpretations and transformations on their way to influencing practice" (Læssøe *et. al.*, 2013: 235).

3.3.1 The complexities associated with 'policy' in schools

Recently, Ball (2015) while restating his above argument of policy analysis also indicates the complexity and connectivity of the translations and interpretation of policy made in schools. Through his arguments, Ball (2015) advocates for insightful discussions and debates on how research should understand and address education policy along with an awareness of the implied changes-politically, theoretically, methodologically and empirically, which holds substantial policy evidence. Policy, in essence, is about trying to achieve a particular goal. It is perceived that education policy intends to operate as a "significant lever of change in an institution intended to serve all children and youth" (Honig, 2006, 1 in Omercajic, 2015: 13). It is crucial to recognise "that *implementation* is an important link between the progenitors' objectives and the proceeding outcomes of policy" (Omercajic, 2015: 13). And because implementation is teeming with "uncertainty and individualized interpretation, this process is difficult to control" (Omercajic, 2015: 13).

Moreover, Ball *et. al*. (2012) examined policy implementation studies and how they "conceive of the school itself as a somewhat homogenous and de-contextualized organisation that is an undifferentiated 'whole' into which various policies are slipped or filtered into place" (p.5). This distinction highlights the difference in the context of the policy enactment to policy formulation process. It also highlights the 'agency' of those who put policy into practise (Ball *et. al.*, 2012: p.2). In sum, policies are "contested, mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts" (Ball, 2015: 6).

By delineating the analytical tools applied by the theorists, I have tried to highlight the complexities associated with policy. These tools will be applied in Chapter 5 of this thesis to highlight the various causes of policies not being implemented the way they should, which in turn affects desired outcomes.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed key documents and research papers that have shaped the notion of education quality, while some specifically in relation to quality primary education. It also outlines key dimensions of quality delineated by international organizations and national policy documents. Nevertheless, to reiterate my argument, although international debates mention 'curriculum' as an indicator for provision of quality education; they do so as a pointer (very 'broadly') with no specificity. In addition, while focus on enrolment, access, retention, pupil-teacher ratio, public spending on education, curriculum mastery by teachers, and so on, are necessary first steps towards quality education, these are not sufficient conditions. A part of the concern can be addressed through curriculum reform process for addressing 'quality' within classrooms. Therefore, this highlights the need for studying curriculum reforms, which is a crucial indicator addressing 'quality' within classrooms. This has also been argued by the World Bank and UNESCO who contend that in curriculum reform lies the cornerstone for ensuring a sustainable society.

Therefore, this study contributes to the currently limited research base that focuses on provision of quality education through curriculum reform policy process for India. I will in my thesis, focus on both the 'economist' and the 'humanistic' approaches for understanding quality education as it is applicable to my area of study. I will apply both these theoretical lenses to NCF-2005 and then evaluate it in terms of qualitative and quantitative goals.

In addition, the complexities associated with policy process have been delineated by discussing the tools applied by eminent policy analysts for analysing policy processes. These will be applied later in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the methods used for carrying out document and policy analysis will be delineated.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research question of how 'quality' education is understood in NCF-2005, the key policy documents and the decision-making context have to be understood. Chapter 4 explains the rationale for this and the approach taken. The Chapter concludes with a discussion on issues related to validity, while also indicating the limitations of the study.

4.2 Research design

The debates around the definition of quality and the causes of complexities associated with policy that were discussed in Chapter 3 have been used in order to identify crucial questions relevant to quality and curriculum reform strategies.

Although the NCF-2005 and various programs differ in terms of their exact goals and timeline, they are centred on: increased enrolment, access, retention for both boys and girls, infrastructure development, teacher training, quality of teachers, curriculum reform and teaching and learning time. The strategy to answer the research question of how quality is understood in NCF-2005 involved two major areas of research. Firstly, an analysis of how different definitions of 'quality' have been addressed both nationally and internationally was done. And secondly, the policy analytical tools applied by various theorist for studying policy processes were applied. This process can be seen in Figure-4.1 below.

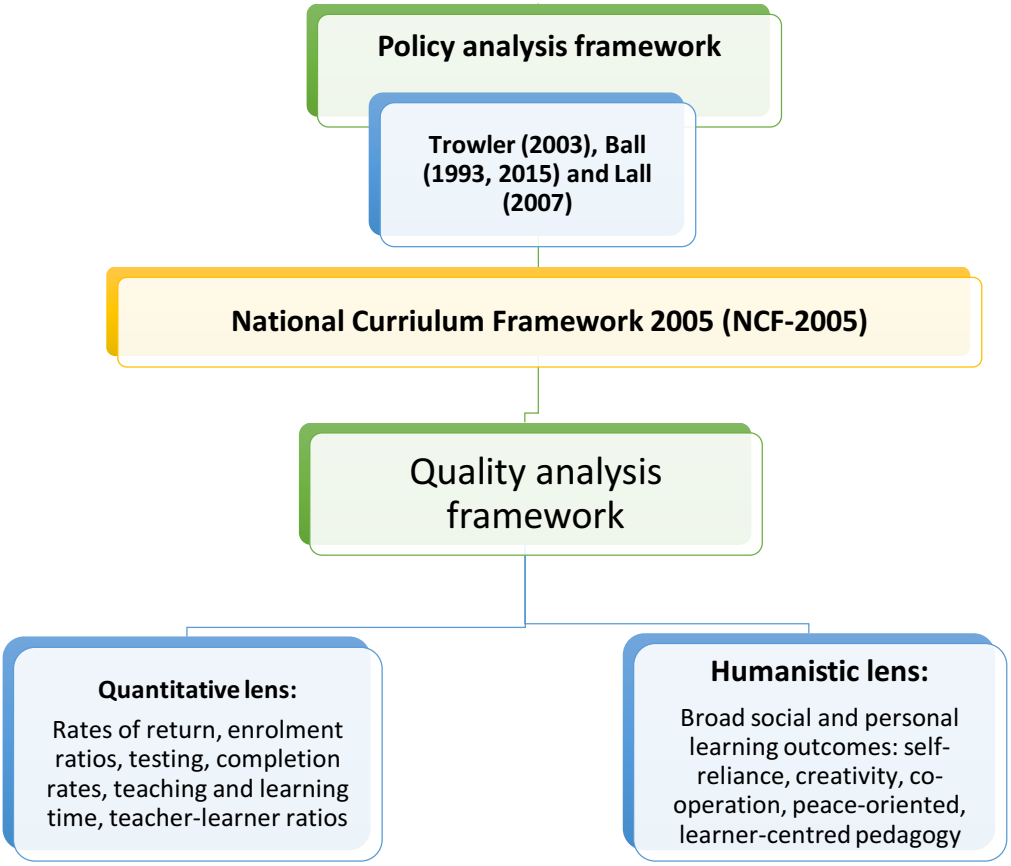

Figure-4.1: Broad conceptual framework

The process is discussed below:

4.2.1 Steps involved in designing the theoretical framework

The initial step of the research method involved designing a theoretical framework and determining its relevance to the study. This was initiated by designing a quality analysis framework, which involved a preliminary overview of international documents and their definition of quality. The 'quality' analysis framework developed contained two lenses: A Quantitative lens and a Humanistic lens.

The second step involved identifying specific terms/concepts within the Quantitative and the Humanist lenses. The specific terms for the Quantitative lens were selected based on the

indicators that international (EFA, WB, OECD) and national documents (NCF-2005 and the QMTs) use to define 'quality' in education. This was achieved after thorough reading of relevant documents/literature, highlighting each instance that was deemed relevant to the terms. Specific terms/concepts identified under the Quantitative lens were: rate of return; enrolment ratio; testing; completion rate; teaching and learning time; and teacher-learner ratio. On the other hand, the humanistic lens comprised of broad social and personal learning outcomes, such as, self-reliance, creativity, co-operation, learner-centred pedagogy and peace-orientation.

In all, the second step was crucial for capturing key information that identified the context of the research. It assisted with developing an over-arching quality and policy lens, with respect to curriculum reform in India. Policy instances that reflected instances of how quality education was recorded in NCF-2005 were identified.

The final step involved inter-weaving the findings about 'quality' into the Policy analysis framework. The inter-woven framework was applied to the NCF-2005 for critically analysing the document, which is the crux of this thesis**.** This in turn gives the framework an over-arching approach of accounting for instances which inform the two lenses- The Quantitative lens and The Humanistic lens along with the specific terms involved.

Hence, the final step provides a guideline to see if there are any gaps or spaces, which demand future intervention. Furthermore, because instances that were not directly linked to the specific terms were also recorded, conclusions could be draw not only on those aspects that were in the framework, but also on those that could be formulated differently in order to render the framework more fitting for studying quality education. The product of the third step of the designing process was the overall findings resulting in conclusion being reached with respect to the two framework. These are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 Research methods

4.3.1 Document analysis

The current study employs document analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis-Fairclough's "textually oriented discourse analysis" as the methodological tool (Taylor, 2004: 435 in Silbert, 2008: 44). The advantages of doing a document analysis, as delineated by Bowen (2009: 31) are: firstly, the documents are easily available and accessible in the public domain. Secondly, they are stable and available for repeated reviews. And lastly, they provide broad coverage.

This thesis' research method required the designing of a framework that included both, document and policy analysis for making it relevant to the present study. An important feature of the framework is that it considers the various definitions of 'quality' as defined at the international level. This directly influences how quality is perceived at the national level, particularly with reference to NCF-2005's definition of quality. The framework also explicitly highlights how complexities in policy affects desired outcomes. This is significant to the study as it provides guidelines for doing policy analysis.

The texts that were selected for analysis included: The National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005); 2013-UNESCO policy analysis handbook; research papers highlighting various contestations around the definition of quality (EFA, WB, EC, OECD); and research papers relevant to policy analysis (Ball, 1993; Trowler, 2003, and Lall, 2007).

The 2013-UNESCO policy analysis handbook acted as a crucial guiding tool that assisted with outlining crucial analytical questions. This, in turn, assisted with developing crucial arguments. Moreover, these broad questions in addition to my examination of relevant documents, assisted me with formulating specific questions relevant to primary education which are discussed in section 4.3.3 below. For the full set of questions refer to Appendix-2: E (1 & 2).

4.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Following the conceptual framework and literature review that assisted with outlining the theoretical framework relevant for this study; CDA is the second methodological tool applied through which the research problem is addressed and the NCF-2005 critiqued. This study aims at presenting a careful and critical analysis of the dominant discourses in the NCF-2005 policy, which are represented as “regimes of truth” (Ball, 2006: 50). Recognising these discourses may assist with understanding dominant influences on the policy and ultimately to open the discursive space for other possibilities. Silbert’s (2008) work in this area provides a comprehensive overview of what CDA means and hence I will be using her interpretation of Taylor (2005) and Fairclough’s (2001) viewpoint of CDA. Hence, CDA has been used as a mechanism for exploring relationship between “discursive practices, events, and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes" (Taylor, 2004: 435, in Silbert, 2008: 42) and understanding how “texts construct representations of the world, social relationships, and social identities” (2008: 42-43) "to help uncover how discourses are implicated in producing and replicating the ideological interests" (Fernsten, 2005: 375, in Silbert, 2008: 44) and influences on the policy-makers.

The two different approaches of CDA- referred to by Fairclough as “textually oriented discourse analysis” (paying close attention to the linguist features of the text), and those paying less attention to the linguist aspects of the text (greater focus on the historical and social context); the one relevant to this study is the former (Taylor, 2004: 435, in Silbert, 2008: 44). This, in turn, will demonstrate policy’s meaning by highlighting: firstly, how policy is established at the global level. And secondly, the implication this policy-borrowing has. The policy will be approached from the perspective of both its inclusionary and exclusionary capacity (Silbert, 2008: 43). Inclusionary capacity of the policy refers to that which will attempt to bring to light the embedded ideologies, exposing the policies influences and orientation. Hence, while critically analyzing the policy document the approach focused on “descriptive through interpretation and explanation for understanding the policy’s meaning” (Fernsten, 2005, in Silbert, 2008: 43).

Furthermore, the interpretive approach to CDA is suitable to the research problem as it is the "subtleties and nuances… rather than stark and distinct patterns and relationships" (Ball, 2003: 2, in Silbert, 2008: 44) that are of interest here. It is the subtleties, ambiguities and contradictions within the meaning encoded in the policy instances will be described through the analysis of the policy text. This, in turn, will unpack social, economic and political influences. In all, a critical analysis of policy instances using CDA method facilitated close examination of the various influences at work in the policy's dominant discourses.

4.3.3 Crucial guiding questions

The different steps involved in designing of the framework also resulted in formulating guiding questions. All of the questions formulated were based on the research questions and the research focus. The questions identified were used in the analysis phase in Chapter 5. In all, these questions do two things. Firstly, they highlight what 'quality' means in the national policy document (NCF-2005) and quality monitoring tool (the NCERT QMTs). And secondly, the questions assist in examining if the measures used for attaining 'quality' in education are adequate. For the complete list refer Appendix-2.

The key questions that guided my analysis during each step are outlined below:

- Are the various policies and programmes suitably aligned to support or contradict what is needed for attaining primary quality education?
- Have the various political, financial and geographical contexts been taken into consideration, and have the relevant stake-holders been consulted?

In addition, crucial guiding questions informing policy text analysis were also formulated. These questions helped illuminate relevant policy instances within NCF-2005 and provide a more general over-arching view of how the national education policy (NCF-2005) addresses broad issues related to education (see Appendix-2).

- For **policy analysis framework** questions refer A

- For **curriculum policy document reform** questions refer B

Questions formulated in the second step informing 'achieving quality education' are outlined in Appendix-2:

- For **demographic, social, economic and political context** questions refer C
- For **learning achievements** questions refer D
- For **'quality'** questions refer E (2)

Policy instances that reflected instances of how quality education was recorded in NCF-2005 were identified. Guiding questions formulated informing this aspect of quality are embedded in questions under Appendix-2, see E (2).

The crucial questions that guided the third step are outlined below:

- Do policy and information gaps still exist? How can evidence-based policy making be improved in the future? What actions need to be taken?
- Does the policy design cover the actual bases of addressing quality education at the primary level of schools? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the design? Are the indicators used valid? Are there gaps or not?

Lastly, questions for analysing the validity of QMTs have also been addressed (see Appendix-2: F).

4.4. Analysis: Validity and Reliability

As the current research focuses on dominant discourses around 'quality' and its interpretation by ground actors, the policy text had to be examined on three levels: "first, that which was presented and described… second, those mentioned but not explicated, and third, that which was absent" (Silbert, 2008: 47). Factual accuracy of the interpretation was made known by quoting relevant texts from documents for easy comprehensibility and accuracy for the reader.

An attempt was made at remaining cognisant at all times of my "subjective interpretation of the text and the extent to which this may affect its validity and reliability" (Silbert, 2008: 48).

Furthermore, coherence of my findings had to be taken care of. I was conscious of the influence of my values and conceptual framework on the interpretation of the text. Validity and Reliability was sought additionally by demonstrating that the "interpretation presented from the analysis of the selected sections of the text was reflective of the text in general" (Brown & Dowling, 1998, in Silbert, 2008: 48). This accounted for "authenticity" through accurate and genuine interpretation of theoretical framework and the research problem (Maxwell, 1992, in Silbert, 2008: 48). Therefore, by ensuring that the findings interacted coherently with the theoretical perspective, an attempt was made to establish both validity and reliability. This, in turn, supported and framed the research question (Silbert, 2008: 48).

4.5 Ethics

Although no human subject was involved in the collection of data, the formal ethical protocols of the university have been adhered to. This includes upholding the standard regulations pertaining to plagiarism. All documents used in this thesis were publicly available and did not require negotiation of access. All quotations have been clearly cited and referenced throughout the text and references used are listed at the end.

4.6 Limitations of the study

It might be that on working with the actors involved in the actual policy-making that their understandings may be different from mine. Hence, in this study, I am working under my bounded understanding of what 'quality' means; where others may have different but equally valid understanding. Furthermore, while CDA has its strengths of providing a critical lens through which "the discursive political discourses that have framed educational change and development" may be described and analysed (Morley & Rasool, 1999, in Silbert, 2008: 45), it also creates constraints, where it "may limit possibilities, reinforcing the researcher's own values,

narrowing the research lens, [and] 'precluding other perspectives…'" (Monkman & Baird, 2002: 449, in Silbert, 2008: 46). However, working with the actual policy texts does reduce this possibility of bias. Hence, an attempt has been made to establish a broad conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) so as to underpin the method employed. Lastly, in terms of time and resources were such that additional document analyses of all Indian policies could not be done. However, these were used for background knowledge and to understand the framework in context.

In Chapter 5, the results of this study are discussed. This chapter will highlight the findings with respect to the study's key research questions.

Chapter Five: The National Curriculum Framework-2005 (NCF-2005)

5.1 Introduction

Central to the reform idea that quality needs to improve are the issues of how 'quality' is defined and measured within the policy documents. There are two key dimensions to this. Firstly, has quality *qua* quality been addressed in a manner that addresses the concept; is it coherent or consistent in itself and is it implementable? Secondly, how is quality understood, defined and enacted in the NCF-2005 policy?

To restate the framework that was discussed in Chapter 4, the definition of quality to be used as an analytical frame in relation to NCF-2005 is the one where quality can be understood both as a 'noun' and as an 'adjective', where it has a wider range of meaning (Alexander, 2008). Alexander's argument of understanding quality encompasses political, global and educational definitions, while also accounting for bureaucratic and administrative decisions (2008). These elements provide the lens through which I will analyse the NCF-2005 as it is a combination of the above. Through this definition, I aim to acknowledge the complexity involved in the policy making process while also applying an educational lens. This, in turn, will highlight application issues.

The above definition then moves into the meaning of quality in education, which then takes me to Gilmour's (1997: 2) questions of "Quality of what? Quality for whom? Quality in relation to what?" which need to be asked. Gilmour (1997) contends that the meaning of the above questions is "constructed out of the interplay amongst ideological forces in the wider society" (Angus, 1992:379 in Gilmour, 1997: 2). Therefore, this results in quality and its consequent indicators becoming a function of "political, administrative, and public conceptions as well as research and educational factors" (see Hofstee, 1992: 24-28; and Lawton, 1994: 2-4 in Gilmour, 2007: 2). The above then highlights educational and ideological contestations, which often engulfs the definition of quality.

So far I have done two things. Firstly, I have highlighted the complexities associated with quality, its definition and measurement. Secondly, I have pointed out that understanding and analysing policy is a complex task because of the political and sociological ideologies underpinning policy texts. Therefore, resulting in quality becoming an elusive policy target. Similar messiness is observed in case of the NCF-2005 which highlights difficulties that can evade achievement of quality issues.

The framework, as discussed in Chapter 4, will be applied to NCF-2005. The development of policy depends on power. This play of power as argued by Trowler (2003), is the political impact experienced during the encoding process. This is similar to Ball's (1993) representation of the policy formulation process in terms of policy as text.

On the other hand, the decoding process will also simultaneously determine whether the policy is to be viewed as text or discourse and/or both (Trowler, 2003). Ball (1993) argues that policy as discourse determines how tasks are accomplished. In case of NCF-2005, discourse would refer to implementation at the districts, school, teachers and students level. How policy is interpreted results in misreading policy texts causing policy-practice gap (Trowler, 2003). All of the above together create policy through ideological and educational lenses of what quality education might be.

Therefore, the above contestations take me to Lall's (2007) argument of how policies get influenced by the international and national spheres due to globalization (p.2). This in turn influences what goes into policy texts, shaping guiding principles and objectives underlined for schools, teachers and learners to aim or follow. As Gilmour (1997) argues, "assuming that some consensus may be reached on the purposes of schooling and on the meaning of quality therein, how does one know that the goals have been reached or otherwise?" (Gilmour, 1997: 2). This in turn introduces the notion of performance indicators. The NCF-2005 has had its fair share of influence by international and national spheres. Hence, this chapter provides a critical analysis of

the NCF-2005 that highlights the various political, ideological and sociological influences that deter effective policy implementation.

In the sections that follow, the 'quality' thread will be critically examined starting from the issues that arise due to differing political ideologies between the Central government and the State. Furthermore, embedded in these political ideologies is some concept of quality. And, through them comes out a whole new set of guiding principles. These get transmuted into indicators resulting in measurements taking predominance (Refer Figure-4.1: 43). These indicators then get translated into the curriculum and assessments. Alongside the above runs the QMTs that is responsible for ensuring 'quality' in education, as advocated for by the NCF-2005. Lastly, since quality in education, as argued in the national and international documents, also demands considering teacher training programmes and resource availability. Therefore, a critical analysis of all the above factors will provide a broad framework on how successful has India been in achieving Goal-6, which the MHRD lays added emphasis on achieving.

This chapter follows the following framework:

- The political ideologies underpinning NCF-2005
    - Guiding principles of NCF-2005
- The strengths and/or limitations of the NCERT Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs)
- The quality issue within NCF-2005
- How does NCF-2005 define quality?
- Curriculum discourses at the primary level
    - Constructivist and/or 'child-centred form of teaching and learning (Curriculum and Language)
    - Assessments in the curriculum
    - Teacher training processes
- Conclusion

5.2 The political ideologies underpinning NCF-2005

Education reform in India up until the 1980's was concerned primarily with improving access to schools and adequate teaching and learning processes (Batra, 2005: 4348). From the 1960s up until the 1980s, the Congress Governments had a liberal curricular policy approach that aimed for inclusiveness of the diverse society. For instance, the NCF-1975 and NCF-1988 advocated education as a tool for social transformation. However, it was only in the late 1990s that the role of the curriculum itself was brought to national focus (NCESE 1988: *Preface;* Batra, 2005: 4348). The Bharatiya Janata Party[13] (BJP) government was then in power from 1998-2004. This shift in political regime allowed BJP to pursue a Hindutva[14] agenda with the curriculum policy reform, resulting in the NCF-2000 (Subramaniam, 2003: n.p).

As Batra (2005: 4348) notes, the NCF-2000 was seen as favouring the 'Hindutva agenda' (which represented the political party ideology of the Hindu Nationalist Party) "in the garb of a national identity". It not only consolidated what was previously done, but also gave the curriculum a new ideological spin, which meant the inclusion of 'Hindutva' biased textbooks.

Nevertheless, there was strong criticism of the reform. The textbooks came under wide scrutiny not only by actors (head-teachers, educators, parents) but also by curriculum theorists. A key criticism faced by the NCF-2000 was that "... the NCF, while loud on rhetoric, fails to address the quality of education that children of poor and marginalised groups experience" (Nambissan, 2000: 54, in Batra, 2005: 4348). At this point the issue of quality achieved greater public prominence than previously and gained impetus, alongside debates related to "equity, inclusion

[13] The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government occupied power in the Center during 1998-2004.

[14] Hindutva, a term coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is a fascist movement, adhering to the concept of homogenised majority and cultural hegemony, where the dominant ideology, in this case, Hinduism, manipulates the culture of the society, their beliefs, explanations, perceptions and values ("Cultural Hegemony": n.p.).

and exclusion, learner diversity, religious identity and communalism [which] gained considerable importance" (Batra, 2005: 4348, my parentheses). This represented a change in educational discourse from the narrow religious–based Hindutva agenda to a wider secular and inclusive agenda (cf. Ball, 1993: 37-38).

Consequently, with the change of national government in 2004 (with the centrist Congress Party and its allies leading the government[15]), and a consequence shift of political interests, the NCF-2000 was revised resulting in the release of NCF-2005. The NCF-2005 emphasised: "safeguarding diversity and preserving heterogeneity" (Subramaniam, 2003: n.p.). With this, the new ruling party with a different ideological perspective redefined the role of education on both a political and an educational level.

This next section focusses on the political issues surrounding NCF-2005 (the discourse), and Section 5.3 below on the educational shifts (the texts).

On a political level, the ideologies of the Congress Party aimed at reflecting principles that were tied to the "Indian constitution of pluralism, secularism and a democratic ethos in school curriculum" (Watson and Ozanne, 2013: 105). It did so to bring about national development, facilitate "social mobilisation and [bring] transformation directed specifically at questions of caste and gender asymmetry and minority empowerment" (Batra, 2005: 4348, my parentheses). Therefore, what NCF-2005 did was locate itself within the rubric of constitutional and social values, unlike the NCF-2000 that was at "variance with the values enshrined in the Constitution" (Raina, 2005: n.p.).

Fundamentally the Congress Party with a large majority in Central Government was able, in the formulation of the NCF-2005, to "de-saffronise" textbooks and curricula nationwide and restore

[15] The leading Congress Party along with the help of its allies put together a comfortable majority of more than 335 members out of 543 in the Rajya Sabha (Indian General Elections, 2014: n.p.).

the secular character of education" ("De-toxification" Article, 2005: n.p.). However, given the separation of power between Central Government and the States, in States run by the opposition BJP government problems persisted with not replacing school textbooks that espoused a Hindu nationalist agenda (IRFR Report-India, 2005). Furthermore, at a national level, the BJP opposition saw the Government's attempt to review the policy guiding principles and the NCERT books as "nothing but an eye wash", for fulfilling its academic and political agenda ("De-toxification" Article, 2005: n.p.). This highlights how contesting views, power plays and ideologies operate, which affects the effective implementation of policy.

This situation derives from the Constitutional position which states that education is a shared responsibility between the Central Government and the States, where each have certain kinds of duties. Thus, the States and the Central Government have to work together to design policy that is then followed by districts and schools. The Constitution lays down *inter alia* norms and standards related to P-T ratios, infrastructure requirements, school-working days, teachers working hours, teacher-training and development of curricula (Government of India, 2016: n.p.).

As Ball (1993) and Trowler (2003) contend, policy is stronger when key stakeholders are represented (Ball, 1993; Trowler, 2003). In the Indian situation while this was the case where the States and the Central Government collaborated in order to pass legislation, it also highlights an immediate area of compromise and negotiation, irrespective of a party having a clear majority. This further implies that there would be a limited possibility of successful policy take-up. In case of the NCF-2005, the formulation process tried to include as many representatives as possible. But its guiding core was the Constitution and the values embodied in it. This implies that States and other stakeholders would have little room to object, as this could open them to the criticism of being anti-constitutional. Hence, in a way some of the tension that Ball (1993) and Lall (2007) describe with respect to whether the policy is going to be taken up is partially dissipated by the core of Constitutional values. In addition, Naik (1962) contends that the "Constitution was out to create a 'strong Centre" [which has higher financial control and] … had the most dominating voice in the overall determination of policies, priorities and programmes" (Naik, 1962: No.26: n.p.).

This significant role of the Central government resulted in States not having the financial capacity for carrying out effective implementation (ET Bureau, 2010: n.p.). This caused most of the controversies on the subject.

Furthermore, States have autonomous powers and differing social, political or ideological underpinnings. This means that even though the Central Government has powerful financial control, there is also the possibility, as in some BJP states, of a 'negative' compliance or more generally a re-interpretation of policy by actors which may follow the letter of the law but not necessarily the spirit of the law. Hence, the States might obey the 'letter of the law' by propagating access, equity, inclusivity but not do anything beyond that. This, in turn, will affect the desired result.

Therefore, on unravelling the NCF-2005, I have got a kind of process involving policy making that gives the impetus for a new policy. This is perhaps not only a political argument but one that also involves public pressure, union pressure, and so on. Hence, this in turn paves way for political and ideological variations (including national and international bodies) to come in. Out of these contestations come new polices with various pressures. This in turn results in a whole new set of guiding principles to which national bodies- the Central Government, the State and the local bodies have to adhere.

Hence, through the above argument it can be observed that the Central Government desires to consolidate power and have more influence through appeals to the Constitution, through financial control and through the quality indicators.

The above differing political ideologies in-turn has impact on the guiding principles of education, which in turn get transmuted into indicators. These are discussed in greater detail below.

5.3 Guiding principles of NCF-2005

On an educational level, deeper than these politically driven initiatives, the professional need for a curriculum review emerged "from the long ossification of a national education system" (Batra, 2005: 4348). The review committee of the final draft of NCF-2005 comprised of stakeholders from different levels that was inclusive of district and local level representatives (Parankimalil, 2015: n.p.). This was specifically initiated to address issues related to curriculum load and its prescriptive nature. It also addressed issues, such as, viewing teachers as instruments incapable of decision making and children as "passive recipients" with little room for developing critical thinking and understanding[16] (Batra, 2005: 4348).

As seen in Table-5.1 below the NCF-2005 aims at presenting a "fresh vision and a new discourse on key contemporary educational issues" (Batra, 2005: 4347).

[16] These ideas have been highlighted in the National Curriculum Framework 2005, p.2

Table-5.1: Educational shifts with NCF-2005

MAJOR SHIFTS	
Previous Curricula	**NCF-2005**
• **"Teacher centric, stable designs**	• **Learner centric, flexible process**
• **Teacher direction and decisions**	• **Learner autonomy**
• **Teacher guidance and monitoring**	• **Facilitates, supports and encourages learning**
• **Passive reception in learning**	• **Active participation in learning**
• **Learning within the four walls of the class room**	• **Learning in the wider social context**
• **Knowledge as "given" and fixed**	• **Knowledge as it evolves and is created**
• **Disciplinary focus**	• **Multidisciplinary, educational focus**
• **Linear exposure**	• **Multiple and divergent exposure**
• **Appraisal, short, few**	• **Multifarious, continuous"**

(Source: NCF, 2005: 110)

Apart from the shift in educational discourse, the new curriculum highlighted once more an important and difficult principle. That is firstly, there should be a single National Policy on Education (1968, 1986 reformed in 1992), and following from that a "national framework for curriculum as a means of evolving a national system of education capable of responding to India's diversity of geographical and cultural milieus while ensuring a common core of values along with academic components" (NCF 2005: 4). Hence, the NPE-1986 entrusted the NCERT with developing the National Curriculum Framework for promoting child-centred education, universal enrolment, and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age (NCF 2005: 4).

This principle however contains an inherent tension between a flexible responsiveness and a need to ensure that goals are attained. Thus, on the one hand the NCF-2005 clarifies that it "does not intend to propose standardization" (Kidwai *et. al.*, 2013: 17) and argues that "relevance, flexibility and quality" characterises NCF-2005 (NCF 2005: 4), and that through 'child-centred learning' it places the child as the centre and builds on the previous knowledge of the individual

child. On the other, however, quality is a thread that runs through out. It identifies quality as an important dimension in education and allots sub-sections within chapters for discussing provision made towards achieving quality education. It is through these 'guidelines' that intentionally or otherwise that 'standardisation' begins to creep in. This will be discussed more fully in Section 5.3.1 below.

The guiding principles on which NCF-2005 (section 1.4: 4-5) was formulated were:

- "connecting knowledge to life outside school (Sections 2.7 and 2.8),
- ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods (Section 2.4.1),
- enriching the curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook centric (Section 2.4.1),
- making examinations more flexible and integrating it into classroom life (Section 3.11) and,
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country (Section 4.2)."

These were designed collectively to provide a better quality education for all and to link to the landscape of social values[17] which are the underlying educational aims. These are:

- commitment to democracy as a way of life,
- promoting equality by accounting for diversity, with respect to, differences and disadvantages (Section 4.3 (minority groups, women, SCs and STs)),
- Internalizing peace-building, justice (social, economic and political) and liberty while showing concern for others' well-being; and inculcating respect for constitutional values, cultural plurality and secularism.

(NCF 2005: 4-7 & 10)

[17] The social goals are reflective of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) Act, 2009.

Apart from the social values, it also aims towards creating awareness of environmental issues. In all, it broadens the scope of the curriculum by promoting decentralisation that facilitates the generation of relevant local knowledge and curriculum practices, including traditional crafts, work and knowledge (Batra, 2005: 4349). Therefore, the above guiding principles represent a completely different understanding of purposes of education, pedagogy and the curriculum than NCF-2000 and previous curriculum framework promoted. In addition, an attempt has been made to link the educational goals, pedagogy and the curriculum. Overall thus, the NCF-2005 advocates a more progressive, humanistic principle for education than the previous curriculum framework.

With respect to the vital area of access, the NCF-2005 reiterates the commitment towards inclusion and access to schools for all children (Universal Elementary Education) through curriculum design. Hence, it advocates addressing inequality in children from different cultural, social and economic background through policies, schemes, learning task and pedagogic practices. However, it does not elaborate on how these measures can be taken or achieved. The objectives are broad with no guiding questions. Nonetheless, a crucial development was the establishment of the link between curricula to the pedagogic concerns of the child via that of the teacher (Batra, 2005: 4349). It emphasizes the child as an active learner by welcoming new discourses which promote engaging questions, remapping and reconstruction of prescribed knowledge, (again with no inputs on how to do so).

Nonetheless, the NCF-2005 represents a positive break from the past. Its principles are in line with international understanding of education and ask a crucial question “Is it time for us to refresh what we provide to our children in the name of education?” (NCF 2005: 1).

The impetus for the new policy was clearly political, ideological and educational. It produced a new formulation that represented a break from the immediate past or its religious orientation of the previous curriculum, and its narrow biases. In that sense the NCF-2005 represents a positive move forward in which the guiding principles link to social aims. Therefore, they have attempted to link together broad social aims with an understanding of education that will facilitate an

achievement of the social goals. Hence, in that sense having begun with the question of "Is it time for us to refresh what we provide to our children in the name of education?" (NCF 2005: 1), the policy makers have gone to considerable lengths in attempting to answer the above question in those guiding principles.

However, if one looks closely at the policy text within NCF-2005, then there are clearly some difficulties which are discussed in the following sections. Firstly, there are general macro-level issues concerning:

5.3.1 The curriculum framework: guidelines vs. standardisation

5.3.2 Quality in the curriculum: external (EFA, WB, OECD) vs. internal influences (NCERT through QMTs)

Secondly, there are meso- and micro-level issues concerning:

5.4 The issue of quality which runs across all levels (through QMTs).

5.5 The curriculum itself (textbooks, teaching and learning methods, curriculum, TLMs and teacher training)

The macro-level issues are discussed in detail below, while the meso- and micro-level issues have been taken up in Section 5.4 and 5.5.

5.3.1 The curriculum framework: guidelines vs. standardisation

There are two broad inherent tensions to addressing specificity or otherwise of the curriculum framework. They are the differing political and educational ideologies.

At the political level, the guiding principles of NCF-2005 can be seen to be have partly arisen due to the constitutional arrangements between the Central Government and the States. When the States have ultimate responsibility for refining and applying the curriculum, the most the Central Government can do is to provide broad guidelines. This broad level of direction giving is politically important. The tension between detail and guideline has to be carefully balanced so as to allow the various States autonomy/flexibility in implementing the policy, while at the same time

preventing them from evading some of the principles of the broad curriculum. In all, the drawback then lies in the answer, and not the question.

On the educational side, Central Government faces similar problems. Although it aims to provide guidelines to States for considering crucial aspects of education that determine provision of quality education, it addresses them vaguely in various instances within the document again to conform to constitutional requirements as well as allowing for contextual variation.

In terms of actual curriculum development, the process followed standard curriculum planning principles that are in line with common understandings of curriculum development (see for example Tyler, 1949) (NCF 2005: 2). This was primarily done to assist schools and teachers provide a framework in planning the experiences that children should have in schools.

However, while there was value in the 'structuring' of the curriculum framework, the problem of vague guidelines remains. Thus, my real critique is not around the 'process', as the curriculum reformists followed a reasonable curriculum plan, but on the lack of clarity which enables possible State re-interpretation and/or avoidance around some of the mechanisms to achieve the goals of social and individual inclusivity.

Overall though, NCF-2005 represents a very positive step forward. However, there are several key issues that remain unanswered:

- First, what is the possibility of applying the principles in the curriculum in schools as diverse as they are in India?
- Second, the political question of how fast can one be expected to apply the above principles?
- Third, how is quality measured and defined within the documents and what impact will measurement have on the desired flexibility of delivery?

5.3.2 Quality in the curriculum: external (EFA, WB, OECD) vs. internal influences (NCERT through QMTs)

While not necessarily designed to satisfy international requirements such as, the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the goals of this curriculum, the NCF-2005, are in line with international curriculum design movement elsewhere (Refer IIEP[18]). Here we see India falling in line with the multi-national/international discourse around the purpose and nature of educational practices through: learner-centred pedagogy, the relationship between teacher and child inside the classroom, effective teacher training, quality teaching processes, context driven pedagogic practices, P-T ratios, and so on (Barrett and Sorensen, 2015).

To reiterate, out of the above guiding principles have come multiple guidelines: pedagogy, type of teacher required, the materials that could be contextually applied, forms of assessment and use of language. Alongside the political and educational frame lies the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) - an independent body/unit, who through their quality control mechanisms ensure that implementation takes place. This quality monitoring mechanism runs from the school through to the Central Government and is an integral part of the application of the curriculum. These Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs) are discussed in greater detail below.

5.4 The strengths and limitations of the NCERT Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs)

The QMTs were designed to provide the quality 'glue' that binds together the educational and social values espoused in the NCF-2005. While the NCF-2005 was not mandatory, the QMTs are utilised by all education systems and States, and UTs (NCERT, 2013: *i*). The QMTs designed by the

[18] The IIEP Planopolis section provides innumerable national curriculum policy documents that are readily accessible.

NCERT provide a comprehensive indicator-based framework whose strength lies in its attempt towards addressing issues relevant to the context. It operates on all levels from schools through to the Central Government. It was revisited by the NCERT with reference to the NCF-2005, the RTE Act 2009 and the SSA Framework, and outlines the various aspects that cover 'quality' education (NCERT, 2013: *ii-iii*). This tool was designed in consultation with States / UTs, NUEPA, TSG and MHRD, and the Government of India (NCERT, 2013: *i*). One of the strengths is its "local and highly specific nature, in terms of very general policy preoccupations [such as, inclusivity, teacher training, P-T ratios, access to TLMs (See Appendix-4)]", which is an important advancement as a model at the national level (Alexander, 2008: 12). The two- way flow of information and consolidation and analysis of the provided feedback takes place at every level (NCERT, 2013: Fig.-1: *v*). These evaluations are applied at five different levels, four times a year.

Nevertheless, the question that is crucial to this study is, how do the QMTs define quality education and address it in the domain of curriculum reform?

As far as "curriculum transaction" is concerned, 'quality' has been limited to quantifiable measurements, such as:

- For every subject an account of which chapter is being taught.
- Coverage of curriculum /textbook so far and within the academic year (adequate/inadequate).
- Textbook distribution (when and/or if distributed late, state why).
- Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) (how many teachers received grants for preparing TLMs, teachers developing TLMs, availability and usage of the same) "TLM material developed by teacher themselves" (NCERT, 2013: 4), 'use of TLMs', and 'distribution of textbooks' (*ibid:* 4).
- Teaching learning process (promoting inclusivity through the learning process (SC and ST), games and sports, gender sensitive library).

(NCERT, 2013: 3-5)

In addition, there are the usual other supporting indicators: P-T ratios, enrolment, availability of schools, teacher-training provisions and evaluation methods. The QMTs cover the following areas: number of primary and upper-primary teachers, enrolment and attendance, curriculum transaction, pedagogy, evaluation and assessment, teacher training and school management committees (NCERT, 2013: 1-8; see also Appendix-4: 128-135). These are primarily quantifiable elements.

However, nowhere does it tackle the curriculum delivery issues such as the application of a constructivist pedagogy, learner-centeredness, and the use of multiple knowledge sources or indeed any of the facets of a 'constructivist curriculum'. In this sense, if pedagogy is considered to be at the heart of a quality education, the QMTs do not 'capture' this essence.

There is however a partial resolution in the way in which the QMTs begin to consider the notion of quality education, through a focus on teacher-training, the use and creation of TLMs and curriculum coverage. In this sense as a tool it is more advanced, sophisticated and covers more areas than before. Nevertheless, as indicated above and as Alexander (2008) argues, a crucial missing area is the pedagogy within classrooms as a delivery mechanism of the curriculum. Part of this problem derives from the lack of specificity in the guiding principles on what constructivist pedagogy should entail (this is more fully discussed in 5.6).

The problem also lies in the difficulty of 'capturing' the qualitative elements themselves, as well as on different administrative levels, and particularly at the school level. Thus on carefully assessing the adequacy of QMTs one can argue that the tool although appropriate, is not a comprehensive and coherent list with respect to curriculum features.

Significantly though, the QMT's do provide a standardisation and control of the curriculum that the general frameworks cannot do. If what is measured counts, then the QMT's through the monitoring of learner performance, curriculum pacing, teacher use of materials, and assessment create a set of guidelines which partially offset the 'vagueness' of the broad NCF-2005 aims and

partially reduce the autonomy of the States. In this sense they serve as a 'corrective' between standardisation and the flexibility of a framework approach.

Apart from this these theoretical and political considerations, technical difficulties around validity and reliability have emerged.

Validity with respect to the relationship between the proposed indicators for curriculum transaction and what actually happens in classrooms, should be reviewed. For instance, one would need to ask what significance does "how many teachers receive grants for TLMs" have with respect to the curriculum (Refer Appendix-4, Q.11(a): 131). To put it in Alexander's words "are QMT users, and QMT authors, barking up the right tree?" (Alexander, 2008: 15). Are 'textbook distribution, TLMs and gender sensitive library' self-sufficient monitoring tools for making provision for quality education?

Apart from the instrument itself, the administrative enormity of the task raises reliability issues of the monitoring tool, with respect to its representation of information for the different levels for which the QMT is followed. The QMT follows an extensive monitoring format i.e. fourteen monitoring formats and three analytical sheets, at the five levels. These need to be monitored and aggregated up to four times a year. This is a very demanding task to manage on grounds of the large number of schools and teachers. There are 1,448,712 elementary schools and 7.7 million elementary school teachers (NUEPA, 2014: 22-23). This means for schools alone at least 5,794,848 million x 8 page QMT form. The sheer volume of manual processing is bound to create difficulties. Therefore, put simply, these numbers represent policy constraints. Furthermore, with schools and teachers placed under varying contexts its consistent applicability poses serious doubt, particularly as the data is aggregated from the school through to Central Government levels. As Alexander says even assuming that the results are "reasonably stable both semantically and methodologically, then reliability remains a problematic aspect of the QMT" (Alexander, 2008: 15).

This then brings to light the "conceptual and/or empirical basis of the dimensions, features and indicators" of the QMTs (Alexander, 2008: 14). With its subsequent revision and failure on the part of NCERT to address these issues further poses question on the 'justifiability' of the format. Lastly, how does the information being collected, analysed and used, determine decision about educational policy and practice (Alexander, 2008: 16)? Hence, adopting a top-down method often weighs heaviest on ground actors who are at the receiving end of accountability procedures. In all, while we have a fantastic paper- based system involving all the elementary schools, it's highly unlikely, based on the above arguments, for such a method to give us desired results.

Hence, in light of above arguments, it can be contended that quality is a difficult concept to realise for evaluation. As indicated, international and national debates have largely centred on indicators as standards for promoting quality education (Alexander, 2008: 11). This results in quality being considered without other basic attributes- in this case- curriculum reform strategy in its totality. As a result, we are hardly in a position to distinguish between a 'quality curriculum' and an ordinary one. This highlights the issue of quality as contentious and an elusive one, which often results due to its competing ideological, social and political influences. To summarize, the comprehensive monitoring tools set out by the NCERT while comprehensive, suffers from the drawbacks highlighted through the arguments above. In all, as the documents in Appendix 4 show, the framework is brief, evaluative and partially prescriptive (see Alexander, 2008: 13).

Given this, it is important now to examine how the issue of quality, as defined by NCF-2005 will be addressed. This raise two further questions: is there a general agreement around what it is using to make provision for quality education, and how receptive and willing are actors at the ground level towards interpreting policy text?

5.5 The quality issue within NCF-2005

5.5.1 How does NCF-2005 define quality?

Through the above-delineated features (guiding principles and QMTs), the NCF-2005 attempts at reaching out to every child while aiming for their holistic development. Nevertheless, if one delves deeper into the quality dimension new challenges emerge. This stands against the participatory democratic vision that the national education system aims to promote and hence demands intervention. The NCF-2005 identifies 'child performance' as one of the measures of the indicator of systemic quality. It does so based on UNESCO's global monitoring report, which discusses systemic standards as the appropriate context of the quality debate (NCF 2005: 8).

From this, the NCF-2005 does not distinctly delineate a working definition of what it means by quality education but rather identifies elements that may determine provision of quality education, such as infrastructure development, availability of resources within classrooms (desks, chairs, textbooks), enrolment ratios, teacher-pupil ratios, utilization of space within and outside classrooms, in-service teacher training, OoSC and the inclusion of minority group students (SCs, STs, CWSNs). Furthermore, it acknowledges the complex conceptual and practical issues related to the provision of quality education by highlighting the proliferation of private institutions[19] over government ones. It acknowledges that this has partly resulted due to increased significance given to examinations for judging education quality. This is further aggravated by government schools having insufficient and/or unequal resource availability (NCF 2005: 8).

Two crucial drawbacks of promoting unchecked privatisation of schools, the NCF-2005 argues, are: first, it undermines the importance of child's mother tongue that assists in meaningful

[19] 25% of all K-12 schools in India are private schools. This accounts for 40% share in student enrolment (FICCI, 2014: 10).

knowledge construction. And second, it excludes children coming from an under-privileged socio-economic background who have limited financial availability. In this way, NCF-2005 acknowledges that appropriate measures should be put in place for achieving quality education. As said, these measures largely relate to inputs such as: resource availability, basic infrastructural support in schools run by States and local bodies, recruiting qualified and motivated teachers and effective teacher training programmes.

This focus on resources derives from a clear recognition of the resource shortfalls. Thus the NCF-2005 argues that "physical resources by themselves cannot be regarded as an indicator of quality yet the *extreme and chronic shortage* of physical resources… are a necessary precondition for quality" (NCF 2005: 8, author's emphasis). This stands contradictory to what 'quality' education entails. In a country as vast and diverse as India, shortage of resource in contrast to 'drastic' shortage is in itself an indicator that a significant number of children will be deprived of a quality teaching and learning experience. If the Central Government is faced with this constraint, then one has to ask 'where does this advocacy for quality education as defined in the NCF-2005 go?'

A further constraint highlighted by both the Chattopadhyaya Commission[20] (1984) and the NPE-1986 is a dilution of the standard of teachers (NCF 2005: 8). It is unambiguous that teachers are central players who assist in achieving quality in education. One can do with sharing resources between schools (particularly in rural areas, as advocated by the NCF-2005) but much harm can be done by neglecting the quality of teaching within classrooms. With 7.7 million teachers in the primary school system alone, the re-training task appears almost over-whelming. Therefore, it is disappointing but perhaps not surprising to learn as Alexander (2008: *vii*) argues that pedagogy does not find its true place in not only the Indian case, but more generally in the international discourse where the provision of quality education is considered. This is prevalent in case of NCF-

[20] The Chattopadhyaya Commission Report (1984) of the National Commission provides recommendations for establishing an integrated teacher education programme after grade twelve, running for four years, where students are required to study other subjects along with pedagogic topics (Bharati Baveja, in Deepa, A., 2006: n.p.). This was primarily done for preparing future teachers.

2005, where learners have been given precedence over teachers, a nod to the principles of constructivism.

Notwithstanding this, the policy document adopts a holistic approach, where it advocates for experiences learners should have in terms of knowledge and skills (NCF 2005: 8). It makes quality and social justice its central theme (*ibid*: 9). It advocates for subjects in the school curriculum to include knowledge that consider the socio-economic and cultural condition of the learners. It argues that quality education is inclusive if it concerns achieving "quality… life in all its dimensions" for the learners (NCF 2005: 9). This has been indirectly addressed via "concern for peace, protection of the environment and a predisposition towards social changes" (NCF 2005: 9). These are viewed as the core component of quality and not merely as values.

Thus, if one looks closely at the NCF-2005, the quality changes addressed are in line with international curriculum design movements. This points to the greater homogenising of what 'quality' entails, which might have derived partially from the root form of globalising of ideas. Moreover, how quality is to be measured is relatively similar to international benchmarks. Therefore, just as international measures have come under criticism for various reasons such as irrelevance of context and misinterpretation of policy text by ground actors, the NCF-2005 measures too can come under similar criticism. Likewise, with performance as a key indicator of measuring 'quality' in education the whole system is likely to become more exam driven. This would then countermand the aim of the NCF-2005 to reduce the curriculum load, create joyful learning, and implement a constructivist and learner-centred approach to learning.

The above was the quality frame and to which I will return to see how it impacts on the curriculum in action.

5.6 Curriculum discourses at the primary level

So far I have dealt with the quality frame, where we have the broad policy framework- NCF-2005 that is supported by the NCERT through the QMTs. The NCF-2005 is a shift as demonstrated in Table-5.1 from a largely traditional approach to education as a whole to a more constructivist approach. For a successful transition to be achieved it is required that the curriculum demands, teacher training, textbooks and support materials, and assessment are all aligned.

The curriculum manifestations in relation to this are discussed below.

5.6.1 Constructivist and/or 'child-centred' forms of teaching and learning:

The NCF-2005, formulated by the NCERT, argues that there are two methods of learning. First, informal learning that refers to "learners' natural ability to draw upon and construct their own knowledge" (NCF 2005: 12). And second, formal learning that takes place in schools and "opens up new possibilities of understanding and relating to the world" (NCF 2005: 13). Hence, the NCF-2005 moves away from the behaviourist method of teaching and learning that propagates "textbook culture" (NCF 2005: 13), "examination-related stress" (NCF 2005: 14) and "lot of drill and practice" (earlier advocated by the NCF-2000) (Agrawal, 2007: 16). It reorients the manner in which the learner and the process of learning is perceived by advocating for "child-centred" pedagogy and defines it as "giving primacy to children's experiences [*by responding to their physical (mental and cognitive development), cultural and social environment*], their voices and their active participation [*by nurturing curiosity*]" (NCF 2005: 13, my parentheses), an approach at the heart of constructivist education.

Agrawal (2007) argues that in constructivist pedagogy "learners construct their own reality or at least interpret it based on their perception of experiences, so an individual's knowledge is a

function of one's prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events" (Jonasson, 1991 in Agrawal, 2007: 18). Crucial elements of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning are discussed below under the following sub-headings:

5.6.1.1 Learner's active involvement in the learning process

5.6.1.2 The role of the teacher

5.6.1.3 Advocating learner-centered pedagogy

5.6.1.4 The activities are 'child-centered' rather than 'lesson-centered' resulting in autonomous learning measures

5.6.1.1. Learner's active involvement in the learning process:

As Agrawal (2007) argues, satisfactory learning experience through constructivism can be achieved only when the student and teacher together determine the learning path and "when the teacher provides suitable inputs to achieve the goals the students set for themselves" (Agarwal, 2007: 26).

Learner's active involvement in the learner centred approach to teaching and learning relies most importantly on what the learners know and the teacher's ability on pedagogic strategies to facilitate that learning. Methodologically, while the NCF-2005 advocates for 'group work', a crucial component of constructivist pedagogical practice, this may affect learner development, as seen in the South African case where the 'learner-centred' approach was misinterpreted for group work by teachers thereby, affecting development of high-order thinking skills (MoE, 2000: 29). This is likely to be the case for India where group work could take precedence over a directive learning procedure, a teaching methodology the NCF-2005 aims to do away with. Furthermore, a prominent spokesperson Rajan Prasad of *Sahmat* argues that including 'local knowledge' may have serious implication of obscurantist ideas entering pedagogic practices especially by teachers who are unaware or have not been trained on how constructivist learning takes place (Deepa A., 2005: n.p.).

Furthermore, this ‘gap' cannot be prevented unless the teacher is able to utilise different pedagogic skills to prevent that. And in a country like India, with one out of five primary teachers reported as unqualified and the need to train to all these teachers, the probability is that the gap between the weaker poorer students and the wealthier stronger students is likely to grow rather than weaken (see Varmal, 2015). This is worsened by teacher absenteeism which the World Bank in 2005 reported as 25% of government primary school teachers. In addition only 50% of teachers are actually engaged in the act of teaching while at work, according to researchers (Kremer *et. al*., 2005: n.p).

In addition, constructivism calls for altering the standardised curriculum in favour of a more personalized course of study based on what the student already knows. This is likely to disadvantage underprivileged children, particularly in rural areas who do not have access to resources or knowledge beyond their own particular situation. Also, constructivism may hinder learning for disadvantaged children who lack the necessary resources to link the relationship between outside and school knowledge.

Central to success is the re-training of teachers. As Batra argues "If education is empowerment, then it cannot talk only of students' empowerment. It should include teachers' empowerment" (Batra, in Deepa A., 2005: n.p.). This lack of ‘empowerment’ has created strong criticism for NCF-2005 centered around the strong advocacy for child-centeredness with teachers having very limited say[21].

Furthermore, as Westbrook *et. al.* (2013) highlight, sometimes teachers although enthusiastic, fail at implementing the new curriculum approaches because of limited “understanding or support [provided] to implement the curriculum as intended” (Westbrook *et. al*., 2013: 27). Such is the case for India where pedagogic methods suffered severe criticism from teachers who had

[21] Refer Deepa A., 2005: n.p.

little or no knowledge of what child-centered and constructivist pedagogic practice requires (Deepa A., 2005: n.p.). This resulted in teachers reverting back to traditional methods of teaching. In agreement with Spillane's (1999) argument of "zones of enactment", "[t]eachers' attention to reform is complex, especially in case of reforms that propose changing the core [of] their practice" (Spillane, 1999: 154, my parentheses). Hence, assuming that educators exist in isolation of a socio-political context leaves a major gap in the vision that the NCF-2005 has for its learners and the society in large. This in turn affects implementation.

It is crucial to highlight here that while the above might hamper implementation, these are not inherent flaws in constructivism itself. While the constructivist teaching-learning practice fits the Indian context due to its pluralistic, multi-diversity and multi-lingual nature of the society. However, we find the same possible weaknesses as seen for various other countries[22]. Similar contestations arise in the Indian context. The crucial question then is, how likely are teachers going to be in an ideological space to accept the changes made in the policy text and consider them as reasonable? Also, training doesn't guarantee that teachers will suddenly switch their teaching role. Therefore, one has to consider the possibility of change for the teachers in terms of culture, teacher-training and teaching methods. This then calls into question the quality issue associated with the NCF-2005 that advocates for such an approach. As Spillane *et.al.* (2002) note, when policy text is "unclear, unspecified, or not detailed, the odds of it being implemented are extremely low".

[22] For instance, the Outcomes Based Education in South Africa (introduced in the late 1990s); Hong Kong (adopted in 2005); Australia, Malaysia (practiced since the 1950s), United States (in the 1990s); Pakistan (working towards its implementation since 2010) and European Union (advocated in 2012). OBE/constructivist form of teaching and learning was subsequently removed due to its various shortcomings, a few similar to ones highlighted in the South African case ("Outcomes-based education", 2016: n.p.).

5.6.1.2. The role of the teacher

The NCF-2005 redefines knowledge by questioning the authority of 'textbook' and transforming it into "facilitators of knowledge rather than the sole custodian of knowledge" (Babu, 2007: 5). In line with Alexander's (2008) definition of the 'noun' form of quality, NCF-2005 contends that "critical pedagogy" facilitates open discussion, collective decision making and acknowledges multiple views in terms of their political, social, economic and moral aspects" (NCF 2005: 23). By social issues it primarily refers to human rights, caste, religion, and gender. Furthermore, the policy emphasizes the agency of the teacher in promoting critical pedagogy and inclusivity (particularly with respect to girls, marginalised groups- SCs and STs and children with disability), all of which are aspects of quality (*ibid*.: 23).

Hence, children's experience, voices and participation is given primacy where they are given the opportunity to make meaning of text in class in relation to their social context. This in turn facilitates critical pedagogy that "works for the development of critical consciousness of learners" (Freire, 1973, in Babu, 2007: 10). The NCF-2005 outlines measures that facilitate and support planning of a flexible and improved teacher performance within classrooms. It also recommends the possibility of adopting "multiple text-books" (Babu, 2007: 5).

Crucial strengths of critical pedagogy as advocated by the NCF-2005 are: first, it questions the monopoly of school over knowledge thus carving a democratic space for knowledge. This transforms the role of the teacher from being a 'transmitter' to a 'transformer' of knowledge (Babu, 2007: 14). Second, in a multicultural society like India's, it promotes "multiple views, perspectives and sensitivity to cultural differences" (Babu, 2007: 10). Third, it challenges students, educators and citizens to rethink established curricula and teaching methodologies for fitting into the context. Lastly, it links school knowledge with outside knowledge, which contextualises school knowledge.

This call for a shift in teacher ideology needs to be seen against a context in which Babu (2007) rightly argues that "[s]chools as an institutionalised knowledge endeavour, in all ages, served the

interest of dominant power relations… represented by the state" (2007: 6). While Indian schools claim to be –the noun- "egalitarian, democratic and inclusive", on the contrary, it has been- "the verb- unequal, undemocratic" and this has excluded learners through physical and epistemological distance (Babu, 2007: 11). As Batra (2005) argues, NCF-2005 constructs teachers as a "homogenous category" who are not far removed from their own-political context, where biases and discrimination against people based on their background exists (2005: 4350). This often results in debates related to equality and gender seldom entering the teaching world.

Therefore, the central question that NCF-2005 evades is: How do you enable critical pedagogy and meaning making among children with teachers who are not very far removed from their own deeply rooted understandings of teaching, learning and subject-matter? To elaborate further, this calls into question the "joyful learning" experience which the NCF-2005 aims for its learners to experience.

I will now critically analyse the implications constructivist and child-centred pedagogic practice has on the orientation and delivery of the curriculum within classroom, particularly at the primary (Grade I-V) level.

5.6.1.3. Advocating learner-centred pedagogy

The NCF-2005 reflects a progressive forward thinking curriculum framework. The insights and recommendations of the policy document has been used for making new and revised textbooks (NCERT, 2010: *Foreword*). NCF-2005 recommends a "plurality of textbooks", CCE, "flexibility in examination, time schedules of schools, and also mother tongue as the medium of instruction" (NCERT, 2010: 6). Thus, NCF-2005 takes into account crucial aspects, such as, systemic characteristics, context, inclusivity, child's ability and resource availability. It allows 'new knowledge' to enter the curriculum both in its design and its implementation by breaking down disciplines and interdisciplinary knowledge (Sajitha and Nath, 2009: 6). This promotes equalising education opportunities by accounting for differences via freedom for inputs.

The 'national' curriculum outlined at the primary level (Grades I-V) includes:

"A. Grades 1 and 2:

- One language- the mother tongue or regional language
- Mathematics
- Art of Healthy and Productive Living

B. Grades 3 to 5:

- One language- the mother tongue or regional language
- Mathematics
- Environmental Studies
- Art of Healthy and Productive Living"

(NCERT, 2006c: *Content;* Cheney *et. al*., 2005: 5)

On further extending the analysis to the scheme of study of curriculum areas at the primary level (from Grade I-V), the policy document provides: cognitive, process, content historical and environmental area. This is along with some ethical values, such as 'joyful learning, team work, independent thinking, creativity, self-discipline, cognitive self-flexibility', that should be transmitted through pedagogical practices (NCF 2005: 20).

It recommends a "softening of distinctions between four core subjects- Mathematics, Languages, Sciences, and Social Sciences" while paying special attention to crafts, peace, health and physical education (Kidwai *et.al.*, 2013: 17). Hence, the curriculum allows local discretion and variation for every subject within agreed national parameters. An outline of what the curriculum for the various levels should cover, according to the NCF-2005, in terms of content, level, standards, curriculum coverage and scope, has been provided in Appendix-3.

On broadly analysing the curriculum, I would like to argue that none of the subject areas talk about the values- constructivist, learner-centeredness, integration of school and outside knowledge, critical pedagogy, it is supposed to deliver. A broad framework of content for the

different subject areas has been delineated symbolising 'essential knowledge'. Therefore, it covers content areas as one would normally find elsewhere.

Therefore, advocating a curriculum that embodies the above principles simultaneously demands a sensitive, informed and dedicated teachers for maintaining such practices. This should follow in conjunction with support measures for the new curricula towards facilitating higher-level teaching. Also, separating out the implementation issues from the curriculum *per se* (constructivist forms of teaching and learning) teachers will have to teach bearing in mind all the caveats highlighted above. However, as Westbrook *et.al.* (2013) rightly contend, with such measures not in place this often results in teachers reverting to "traditional, entirely directive curricular approaches" by default (Agyei and Voogt, 2011 in Westbrook *et. al.*, 2013: 28). This seems inevitable in the Indian case.

On coming back to the issue of 'What constitutes quality education?', one of the strengths of the NCF-2005 guidelines is that it has a balanced approach. To elaborate further, it looks to produce a well-rounded learner with learning areas accompanied with "work, health, yoga, physical education, music and art" (NCF 2005: 73). If we define a reasonable quality education as the kind mentioned above, when we apply those guidelines or criteria to the primary curriculum, the overall picture on paper looks impressive- it tries to be holistic.

However, it falls short in certain areas. Large emphasis has been given to Mathematics, Science and English in comparison to other subject areas. Furthermore, although the curriculum at the primary level includes health, physical and peace education as Alexander (2012) argues "those subjects whose content is to be determined by each school individually -- it is hard to know how accountability can be meaningfully demonstrated in other than a highly localised and non-transferable sense" (Alexander, 2012: 372). A crucial argument which then comes out of this is that 'standards' for providing quality education should not be restricted to the 3R's. As this stands contradictory to curriculum being conceived as a whole, "addressing questions of scope and balance in relation to individual, cultural and economic need" (Alexander, 2012: 379). On the

contrary, “schools should … be accountable for the quality of the whole curriculum, [and] not just part of it” (Alexander, 2012: 372, my parentheses).

Therefore, in order to achieve genuine curriculum reform, the enactment of curriculum in schools and classrooms is a much more “powerful determinant of education quality and progress than the curriculum as prescribed on paper” (Alexander, 2012: 379). This assists with achieving genuine curriculum reform. Hence, as delineated through the QMTs, having ‘control measures’ such as, teacher training, evaluation, distribution of textbooks, usage of TLMs by educators though ensures teachers teach what is required. However, this affects the autonomy of the teaching profession. And, while the curriculum needs to be taught to the highest possible standard, how effectively will the curriculum be taught, when it “has expanded in *scope* and *complexity* beyond what the inherited pattern of generalist class teaching can sustain” (Alexander, 2012: 380, authors emphasis).

To give a sharper orientation, let us look broadly at the primary (Grades I-V) curriculum. This will provide insight on the how the curriculum addresses learner-centredness, constructivist pedagogy and critical pedagogy.

5.6.1.3.1 Design features for the curriculum at primary level (Grades I-V) within NCF-2005

A key feature of the primary curriculum is an attempt to integrate subjects using the principle of ‘horizontality’ and the use of ‘everyday knowledge’. A good example of this is the environmental science core subject. The NCF-2005 argues for science curriculum developers, at the primary level, to integrate both 'science’ and ‘social science’, while also incorporating elements of environmental and health education in it. It correlates development of scientific learning through language skills- reading, writing and speaking (NCERT, 2006b *iv*; NCF 2005: 48). For Classes I and II it argues for an activity based, unstructured method of pedagogic practice for facilitating children’s pace and group activities (NCERT, 2006b: 30). However, for Classes III to V, it argues for a structured pedagogic practice method (*ibid:* 12-13). The curriculum embodies cross-

curricula themes and the chapters are thematic in its approach for blurring the boundaries between 'science and social-science' subject. The contents are scaffolded and built-up over-time. The broad content guidelines show grade progression from simple to complex concepts. Therefore, a learner's cognitive development is accounted for where the concepts are not a break from one another, but rather an extension.

The environmental science curriculum guideline due to its thematic approach embodies Bernstein's (1999) 'horizontal discourse'. These "discourses do not have explicit progression criteria and specific texts, and as a consequence they tend to exist in the present rather than in the past" (Bernstein's 1994, in Whitty *et.al*., 2006: 34).

This is where difficulties begin to emerge. Science as a subject is seen as an example of Bernstein's (1999) 'vertical discourse' that should have "coherent, explicit [progression], systematically principled structure, [and] hierarchically organised" texts (Bernstein, 1999: 159). Thus while the reform may conform to constructivist forms of knowledge organization this 'horizontality' cross-curricula curriculum in a way signifies "conflicts with the requirements of subjects that are constituted by vertical discourse" (Bernstein, 1995, in Whitty *et.al*., 2006: 34). Depending on the teacher's skills and resources this 'conflict' may have a deleterious impact on learners' later understandings of science (see Bernstein, 1995, in Whitty *et.al*., 2006: 34). This is an issue for all subjects as the power of 'outside' knowledge begins to wane with the strengthening of content and more abstract concepts within the text book.

This raises another key aspect of the constructivist approach of NCF-2005 – the availability of a variety of TLMs to support teachers. As matters stand, despite the call for a variety of knowledge sources there is only one text book available per subject and in consequence a single curriculum largely unable to account for diversity either cultural or linguistic.

As a result, although the curriculum has been stripped of its overt gender biases, caste and class discrimination it still has a middle-class bias. Therefore, the textbooks sometimes refer to

examples that privilege learners coming from urban areas, but which learners in the far end of the rural regions will find difficult to relate to.

The crucial question that arises is, what kind of a learner did the curriculum developers have in mind while designing textbooks? Likewise, what kind of teacher did the planners have in mind? As Clarke notes, differences in the cultural dimensions of teachers will result in them being either "open and receptive" or "resistant and antagonistic" to the change process in thinking and teaching (Clarke, 2003: 40). How teachers construct classroom activity and the "tacit or implicit framework that underlie their thinking and action in the classroom" are significant factors that should be accounted for successful pedagogical reform (Day *et.al.*, 1993, in Clarke, 2003: 28).

Taking a broader perspective on the 'national nature' of the curriculum delineated by the NCF-2005 and its adoption by various States a crucial limitations arises in a manner where the curriculum is applicable for those learners who are enrolled in Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools located in different States[23] (Surya, 2008: n.p.), while few States[24] are aiming towards adopting the NCF-based materials in State schools.

Thus, for equal quality, as Alexander argues, making way for a national curriculum should be an entitlement for all schools in different States for all learners to follow and "an obligation on all those who teach in those schools" (2012: 378).

Given the constitutional arrangements discussed previously, the extent to which these 'obligations' are taken up will vary by State. So, even though all the States have taken up the

[23] NCF- 2005 has been translated into 22 languages and has influenced the syllabi of 17 States.

[24] A few States, such as Goa, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have sought copyright permission for adopting NCF-based material in State schools (Kumar, 2008, in Surya 2008: n.p). Copyright agreement of NCERT textbook usage can be accessed via the NCERT website (see www.ncert.nic.in).

framework (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3: 21), there is still avoidance of the goals. As Upadhyaya (2015) questions, “How can such non-compliance and violation of RTE Act invoke stony silence as a response?” (Upadhyaya, 2015: n.p.). By divesting the detailed finalising, the Acts and implementation to the individual States, not only are rights to education in general not necessarily guaranteed but also there is no guarantee that the constructivist ideals in the Act would be followed up because there is no political sanction for those States, schools or teachers that do not follow it.

5.6.1.3.2 Issues associated with language

Now delving deeper into the language issue, “language is both a source of identity and a key means by which people can either gain access to power or be excluded from it” (Rassool, 2007, in Westbrook *et.al.,* 2013: 14). The medium of instruction within classroom has equity implications (Rassool, 2007, in Westbrook *et. al.,* 2013: 14). Hence, a crucial strength of the NCF-2005 is it asserts importance “on the development of the child's language competence” as it facilitates creativity, independent-thinking and communication. (NCF 2005: 67). The NCF-2005 acknowledges and advocates for learning taking place within classrooms in mother tongue (including tribal languages) irrespective of small number of learners (NCF 2005: 67). Therefore, in order to achieve “unification it endorses the three-language system[25] that was developed and refined by successive education commissions” (Central Advisory Board of Education, 1957, in Ramanathan, 2008: 113).

The first language is the medium of instruction in schools. Second language is required to be taught from Grade-V and the third language must be studied for at least three years between Grade VI and X. While the first and second language is examined by the CBSE and The Council for

[25] The three language formula was formulated by the Union Education Ministry of the Government of India in consultation with the States. This provides the study of “Hindi, English and modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in the Hindi speaking states and Hindi, English and the Regional language in the non-Hindi speaking States" (Government of India, 2012: n.p.).

the Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) in Grade X and XII, the third language is tested internally by the school (Saini, 2000, in Ramanathan, 2008: 114).

Although, NCF-2005 through the 'three language formula' aims at accounting for the multilingual society; disparity via language creeps into the school system through private schools who give precedence to English by aiming "at making their students English-'able'" (Aggarwal, 1991, in Ramanathan, 2008: 114). This perception is further bolstered through peoples' perception who give English language an "elite" status (Aggarwal, 1991, in Ramanathan, 2008: 114). As Ramanathan (2008) rightly contends language proficiency of teachers in public and private schools varies considerably where the former is the "least proficient" (Pal, 2005, in Ramanathan, 2008: 114).

In addition, newspaper articles have been published for certain States, such as, Goa[26] and Gujrat where continuing uncertainty over language of instruction in schools has caused failure on the part of the schools to engage with the youth and develop the State's human resource potential. For instance, Chinai (2007) reports that inability on the State governments part to "evolve a rational [language] transition policy for medium of instruction in schools" has resulted in children "not [being] able to cope with drastic transition from the use of their mother tongue at primary level, to the use of English in middle school" (Chinai, 2007: n.p., my parentheses).

A part of the issue arises where first generation learners do not receive necessary support from family members because of their own lack of literacy and lack of financial resources to hire tutors. This in turn has resulted in increased drop-out rates (Chinai, 2007: n.p.). Furthermore, as language of instruction differs regionally, how do learners to whom English has not been taught in schools undergo this medium instruction switch and transition to universities. And as

[26] The education system of Goa emphasises on the use of an Indian language- Konkani or Marathi- at primary level up to Grade four (Chinai, 2007: n.p.).

Ramanathan (2008) argues "linguistic issues are still a political tool", where State governments modify the three- language code sometimes at the expense of national language[27], with English finding predominance (2008: 122).

This then calls into question the hundred percent enrolment goal, access and reduction in drop-out rate that the Indian government aims for. Hence, the national framework seemingly a desirable policy should not be devoid of those contextual and historical factors that enables poorest of the poor or rural people to have quality education. If quality education is partly about access and not just to schools but also knowledge, then is that knowledge constructed in a way that enables people of minority languages or different languages of rurally based kids to actually access knowledge and not access to schools alone?

The aforementioned elements of the curriculum will in turn have effect on the assessment, which has been discussed below in greater detail.

5.6.1.4 The activities are 'child-centred' rather than 'lesson-centred' resulting in autonomous learning measures:

With changes in pedagogic practice from rote learning to constructivism, the NCF-2005 necessitates "a new paradigm for evaluation" (Agrawal, 2007: 20). A major shift in conducting evaluation and assessments comes in the form of learners being assessed on tasks relevant to the real world. NCF-2005 advocates for the Indian exam system taking up a more "humanistic and differentiated" (NCF 2005: 115) approach by being "open, flexible, creative and user friendly" (NCF 2005: 116).

[27] For instance, the Tamil Nadu government proposed learning of regional language rather than Hindi with English language escaping this calumny. This was due to its increased utility in the job market (Ramanathan, 2008: 122).

It advocates for schools to adopt "evaluation of the process of learning, progress of learning and also the product of learning" (Agrawal, 2007: 23) through an implementable scheme of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation[28] (CCE), primarily for the "diagnosis, remediation and enhance(ment) of learning" (NCF 2005: 115). Therefore, it accommodates individualised needs and pace of the learners. In addition, with new and revised textbooks it allows for "continuous evaluations of the multiplicity of skills and knowledge" acquired by learners in a year (Kidwai *et. al.*, 2013: 18). Furthermore, as representatives of the Department of Education in Science and Mathematics warrant, the NCF-2005 advocates for "oral testing, group work evaluation, open-ended question, open-book examination without any time limit [and] on demand examination", methods of assessment (NCERT, 2010: 41-42).

In agreement with Agrawal (2007) the NCF-2005 "strongly propose[s] a change in the typology of questions" for incorporating reasoning and creative abilities replace memorisation as the basis of evaluation (Agrawal, 2007: 24). A holistic approach to assessment has been taken by arguing for formulating questions that have been carefully vetted by experts, and "could be categorised according to level of difficulty, topic/area, concept/competency being evaluated and time estimated to solve" (NCF 2005: 114).

5.6.1.4.1 Assessment at the primary level (Grade I-V)

Coming to the scheme of assessment at the primary level (Grade I-V), CCE has three parts-scholastics, co-scholastic and co-curricular activities. These are to be conducted based on the guidelines delineated by the NCERT. While the scholastics domain is graded on a five-point scales (from A [4.1-5.0] to E [0-1.0]). The co-scholastics domain is graded on a nine-point scale (from A1 [91-100] through E2 [0-20]). The co-curricular activity falls within the co-scholastics domain.

[28] CCE was primarily planned for evaluating secondary school learners. However, it later permeated to lower grades (Kidwai *et.al.*, 2013: 18).

These have descriptive indicators for which the learners are continuously observed and allotted marks (Nawani, 2013: 35).

Furthermore, the NCF-2005 does not advocate for formal assessment for Grades- I and II. Rather, general observation made by the teacher on various aspects, such as, interests, abilities, skills, status of health and other aspects of the child should be the form of assessment. For Grades- III-V, CCE should be propagated and assessments should incorporate reading ability, articulation, language comprehension and observation (NCERT, 2006a: 13). Lastly, at the primary stage (Grade I-V) it advocates for "no formal periodic test, no awarding of grades or marks, and no detention[29]" (NCF 2005: 48; see Appendix-3).

Hence, NCF-2005 advocates for an ongoing rather than a one-time evaluation method which it argues has important strengths. They are (Agrawal, 2007: 21-22) firstly, a stress on the 'process' of learning rather than the end product. Second, it is context driven and student-centred. Third, it "allows for different interpretation of knowledge and meaning" in turn being less restrictive (p.23). And lastly, such an assessment not only assess "learning as an end in itself but also a means" for improving one's teaching-learning processes and provide enhanced support to students (Nawani, 2013: 34).

Nonetheless, irrespective of the above highlighted strengths limitations associated with such methods of evaluation remain. They are:

- Keeping individual record of students' assessment turns into a constant struggle for an already overworked teacher (Nawani, 2013: 36).
- The multiple modes of assessment proposed exposes the whole child who is now "subject[ed] to observation, surveillance and control" (Bernstein, 1978 in Nawani, 2013:

[29] Non-detention refers to students not being detained in the same class due to unsatisfactory performance. Rather the NCF-2005 recommends remedial measures for improving performance (NCERT, 2010: 42).

35). This blurring of boundary particularly at the co-curricula arena, resulting in emphasis on the whole child may on the contrary aggravate stress for students (Nawani, 2013: 35).

- Replacing marks with grades (since 2010), will have similar implication as higher learning institutes will continue to perceive grades as proof of leaners ability to perform (*ibid:* 35). This will create possibilities for analysing "the quality and consistency of various examiners" (NCF 2005: 115).
- Advocating that CCE provides a more realistic picture of the learner assumes that schools will have skilled teachers who are capable of supporting students in their growth in multiple dimension.
- CCE embodies assessing overt behavioural pattern and as Nawani (2013) questions, could a teacher be trained to make 'fine distinctions' between behavioural patterns? (2013: 37). Furthermore, asking children to self-report on their learning for facilitating insights on their educational progress and providing "feedback on improving curriculum or pedagogy" again sounds a bit preposterous (NCF 2005: 74).
- Assuming that teachers trained in the philosophy and technique of CCE, will automatically ensure its successful implementation ignores the constraints that differing cultural back-grounds of the teacher and learner imposes. This demands "de learning of conventional [pedagogic] approaches and re learning of emerging [pedagogic] approaches" (Pandey, 2011: 11).

In all, CCE, which finds its roots in the RTE Act (2009), while aspiring to move away from rote-learning and text-book knowledge is highly unlikely to achieve its goals. As Nawani (2013) argues CCE is being proposed as a "panacea for all examination-related ills with no clear explanation of its meaning" (Nawani, 2013: 34). Through the descriptors it indirectly specifies the kind of "skills, attitudes, disposition and knowledge" it aims for its learners to attain irrespective of the "pluralities that children belonging to different communities may represent" (Nawani, 2013: 38). CCE's subjective nature has not been addressed by NCF-2005. Also, since it acts as a template for other State education departments, this may have implications that may not have been considered.

As a result, the values which NCF-2005 advocates for conducting CCE contradicts "both the spirit and manner suggested for its execution" (Nawani, 2013: 39). Classroom culture and pedagogic practices are crucial components that facilitate effective CCE. Hence, exhaustive and extensive processes for conducting the assessment, does anything but empower the teacher to assess their students (Nawani, 2013: 39).

Henceforward, I will now delve deeper into systemic reforms, teacher training processes and learning materials, to analyse how have these been addressed for facilitating successful implementation of the curriculum and assessment.

5.6.2 Teacher-training processes

Moving further into other criteria, while the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and experiences intended for learners is in line with the educational aims, these experiences cannot be attained without considering the pre- and in-service teacher-training programmes

While the in-service training is conducted via a large number of government-owned teacher training institutions (TTIs) (MHRD, 2016: n.p.), the pre-service training is planned and coordinated by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body of the Central Government. The pre-service teacher education curriculum is intended to develop professionalism and infuse confidence in teachers (Pandey, 2011: 4). As Pandey (2011) reports, the current National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE-2009)[30] "tries to ensure that teachers are align[ed] with the epistemological shift [from traditional behaviorist to

[30] The NCFTE-2009 was based on the guidelines delineated in NCF-2005, and the principles laid down in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (Saigal, 2012: 1016).

constructivist discourses that accounts for pedagogical shifts, context and concerns of the learner] envisaged in the NCF-2005" (Pandey, 2011: 9).

Nevertheless, ground observations tell a different story. As Pandey (2011) reports, the current teacher education programmes "continue to prescribe [the] traditional approach of psychological, philosophical and sociological basis of education" (Pandey, 2011: 11). Furthermore, while the content and themes in the teacher education curricula reflect a few changes; discrepancies in the teacher preparation programme duration specified by the NCFTE-2009 (which is for two years) and the actual course (which is for one year) arises (*ibid:* 11). A crucial criticism, as Pandey (2011) highlights, is that regardless of constructivism being advocated by the NCF-2005 "efforts and achievements of the learners are still being evaluated using behaviourist approaches and [a] quantitative grading system" (Pandey, 2011: 11). This therefore, calls into question the progressive learner-centred pedagogy that the NCF-2005 advocates for. Also, changes in the teacher curriculum does not guarantee that implementation will automatically take place. Put simply, the in-service teacher-training programme are not equipped to deal with "powerful ideas", such as, learner-centredness, activity-based learning and context driven curriculum (NCERT, 2008: 8).

Apart from ineffective teacher-training programmes, insufficient funding also hinders effective pedagogic practice in classrooms. To elaborate further (NCERT, 2008):

- The Central Government largely supporting funding for education through pre-determined schemes results in insufficient division of funds between the Central and the State Government. The funds allocated are often insufficient thereby affecting States' Governments ability to achieve universal education (p.17).
- An inadequate number of teachers in a rapidly expanding school system with limited fiscal investments in teacher training programmes has resulted in the rapid erosion of the status of teachers. For instance, 15% (95,588) of all primary schools are single classroom schools with 95% of them located in rural areas. Out of these, 17.51% (111,635) of schools have only one teacher. Of these single-teacher schools, 96% are located in rural areas

(DISE, NIEPA, 2005, in NCERT, 2008: 6). This highlights the need for training and allocating a greater numbers of skilled teachers to rural areas (p.6).

In all, the current pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes are unlikely to produce the shift in pedagogic practice, from rote-memorization to teaching for understanding and innovativeness as opposed to time tested traditional methods (Pandey, 2011: 11). The above factors will have implications for carrying out effective pedagogic practices and conducting assessments, which may become a mechanical process rather than being creative and comes at the cost of teaching.

In all, recognising the multiple constrains initiating from the current pre- and in-service teacher training, necessitates a call for a more systemic task analysis of teachers and support measures at the various levels. Hence, this will require considerable structural and process changes that the above discussions have sought to outline.

5.7 Conclusion

Based on the above analysis presented, it can be argued that the 'quality' issue operates on two levels- first on the political level, and second on the educational level.

At the political level, the 'quality' issue comes in the form of differing viewpoints present between the Central and the State governments. The political situation enables States to deliberately misinterpret key aspects particularly those relevant to access and inclusion. Hence, while the QMTs supports the Central Government in the interpretation of 'quality' education attained at the State level. There are difficulties seen when the QMT uses the tool for keeping people within the guidelines. For instance, while monitoring tool aims at decentralisation. But with standard formatting procedure to be followed at the various levels highlights the complexity that arises due to this centralisation of monitoring 'quality' education. Moreover, it does not cover sufficient quality issues and the amount of paper work generated makes it an even impractical tool.

Therefore, this represents a drawback on an administrative implementation level. Despite the discourse that the broad NCF-2005 framework presents (a secular, social, democratic and professional ethics theory of education), the QMTs are likely to push the teachers, inadvertently perhaps, towards the traditional frames of pedagogic practice. Hence, here one begins to see NCF-2005 and the QMTs being interpreted as 'text' that is representative of the various stakeholders, government representative, educationists and teachers and therefore followed by ground actors.

At the educational level, the 'quality' issue operates in ways in which the aims of policy have been encoded in the curriculum guidelines and its enactment by ground actors. The broad over-arching discourse on 'quality' flows through into the descriptions of the actual curriculum. While constructivism promises a better quality education because of its accommodation of diversity (very relevant in the Indian context), the implementation of this is difficult. Thus, the curriculum guideline is sparse and vague, in order to accommodate different contextual interpretations of quality education. Hence, here one begins to see curriculum as both 'discourse' and 'text', where implementers have to take on the new paradigm but also try to implement it in their respective contexts. As indicated though, an attempt has been made to control the degree of interpretation through the provision of the single text books and the QMTs. This is a constant tension that runs through the education system as the political and cultural requirements of the stake-holders need to be accommodated.

In terms of the curriculum itself and the organisation of content, it represents 'horizontality' in knowledge discourse in an attempt towards making it inclusive by accommodating relevant contextual feature of learners lives. However, an immediate difficulty associated with this arises where there is a possibility of insufficient grounding when students move on to subject or content areas that are more vertically defined.

Moving further into the implementation story of teachers, who are the forefront of promoting the above ideals, would require proper training and material support. But as highlighted above,

the teacher-training is problematic, and the textbooks could be considered problematic where the implementation of the content that takes account of the learners' environment is largely left at the jurisdiction of the teachers, particularly in rural level. This goes against the constructivist frame. It's contradictory in proposing the same content, same logic within a framework that demands variety for promoting inclusivity. Therefore, in this sense, the goal towards achieving 'quality' education is being lost. Hence, the pragmatic implementation- none of which are impossible to overcome in the long run, but is confounded by the textbooks and the organisation of the curriculum. Moreover, with assessments running alongside of the curriculum, which is not mandatory on the teachers to follow, may further reinforce traditional assessment forms. This highlights the tension and/or complexities that operate at the educational level.

Consequently, NCF-2005 while aiming to answer the question "Why has education become a burden rather than a source of joy?" (Surya, 2008: n.p.), suffers limitations by not accounting for the shift required in teachers who are not divorced from their own political and social contexts and who may find the changes very difficult to accept.

Thus, the analysis presented above highlight some of the difficulties associated with curriculum policy development within the policy framework. The attributes of 'quality', which is that as 'noun' becomes a function of political, administration and public contention.

And so, the issue of quality is contentious and an elusive one. As Sayed (1997) rightly argues quality is never represented in a manner that highlights the competing ideological, social and political influences on the definition. The ideological influences come in the form of competing interests, which can be divided into educational progressives vs. behaviourists. The political interests come with politicians and governments having differing agendas. And both these are influenced by the social, that is, what interpretation do parents, society and learners give to quality? All of the above affect the desired manner of interpretation further affecting the process of coordinated change at the national and organizational level.

Hence, based on the analysis presented above it is clear that quality cannot be answered in an *a priori* fashion. In order to truly address the issue of 'quality' in education in the Indian context a closer examination of the ideological shift, scale and nature of change that the framework aims to achieve demands future intervention.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis began with an examination of the 'quality' issue as addressed by the NCF-2005. In order to do this a model comprising two main elements of 'quality' was constructed. These were quantitative and humanistic lenses. In the Indian case progress has been made in terms of the quantitative indicators – improved access, a reduction in drop-out rates, increased literacy rates for youth and a better inclusion of minority group members. As discussed, this focus on measurable outcomes is a necessary step in achieving quality.

However, these measures are not sufficient, and the humanistic indicators, which I argued better capture the concept of 'quality' have been downplayed. This was seen in the national monitoring documents – the QMTs, the texts, and the lack of teacher training to implement the new curriculum. Despite this, the aims of the curriculum and the movement towards humanistic ideals represent a major advance for educational thinking in the Indian context.

On examining the policy documents, it became clear that the problem does not necessarily lie with the quality indicators or the definition of quality. On the contrary the difficulty lies far more with complex implementation issues. These relate to firstly, the political tensions that exist between Central Government and the States which resulted in the NCF-2005 framework being very 'loose' so as to preserve the States' autonomy, but which opened the way for non-compliance. Secondly, on an educational level, as the analysis in Chapter 5 demonstrates, the contexts of the teachers and schools were not paid sufficient attention. In this regard (and this may partly be a function of scale) many teachers are untrained or unprepared for the demands of a constructivist curriculum with a consequent slippage back to traditional methods of teaching. This is reinforced by QMTs which focus on 'traditional' indicators of progress.

In these ways issues related to 'quality' gets disrupted due to differing political, social and education ideologies from the Central Government through to the States. Ultimately, what we have then is largely an administrative and political definition as opposed to an educational one.

This does not necessarily make NCF-2005 a bad policy. Nevertheless, since the overall issue here is around quality, the first question that arises is, 'Is the educational reform largely a political story? Or is it a power game being played out against opposition? Or is it a genuine educational reform?' Interestingly, the NCF-2005 symbolizes all of the above, which further bolsters Trowler's (2003) argument of policy being a 'messy' process. In this case it was a process carried out largely without reference to the ground actors. The subsequent gap between the policy and its implementation should therefore not be surprising.

And it is perhaps in recognition of this that NCF-2005, although a step forward, is going to be revised probably in 2017, once the new NPE is finalised.

Word Count: 25,404

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress towards the EFA goals

Appendix 2: Policy and Quality related critical questions

Appendix 3: School stages and curricular areas

Appendix 4: School Monitoring Format Sheet

Appendix 1: Progress towards the EFA goals

GOAL-1 (NUEPA, 2014: 13).	Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is taken care of in India through the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) scheme for children between six months to five years of age (p.13).	• Number of projects under the ICDS[31] schemes have increased from 4,068 to 7,025 (approximately 73%) between 2001-2002 and 2012-13 (p.13). • The Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) supporting early childhood care and education (ECCE), for children aged 3-5, increased by 145% between 2001-2002 and 2012-13. (p.14) • Pre-school education, children of age 3-5+ years, increased 112% between 2001-02 and 2012-13 (p.14). • ECCE service provided by formal schools, NGOs and private providers have further increased the percentage in pre-primary enrolment. • The enrolment in pre-primary education increased three times from 13.87 million in 1999-2000 to 41.3 million in 2010- 11 (Refer Figure 2.1.5: 17)	• Significant issue of quality arises due to lack regulatory system in certain States for provis of per-primary education remains an area requiring future intervention, particularly for rural and tribal areas (Ambedkar University, Delhi, 2013, in p.17). • A large number of children still remain unenrolled in any of the pre-primary facilitie (approximately 14%). (p.17) • Furthermore, universal provision of early childhood care and education remains an iss for India (p.18).

[31] The ICDS scheme is one of the world's largest programme for early childhood development. The main programmatic interventions include: provision of supplementary nutrition for children (6 months – 5+ years) and lactating mothers; pre-school education, immunization and health check-up facility for child and expectant mothers (NUEPA, 2014: 13).

GOAL-2: (UNEPA, 2014: 20)	Universalisation of elementary education (UEE) by addressing universal access and enrolment, universal retention, bridging gender gaps and making provision for primary and upper-primary education of satisfactory quality.	• An increase in the number of schools imparting elementary education by 71.4% between 2000-01 and 2013-14 was observed (Figure 2.2.1: 22). This progress, in turn, accounted for increase in universal access. • Enrolment for elementary education (Classes I-VIII) showed anomaly. Between 2000-01 and 2012-13 an increase in enrolment was observed (from 156.6 million to 199.1 million), which then followed a decline in 2013-14 to 198.9 million (Table 2.2.2: 23). This resulted due to the decline in the child population age group of 0-6 years (NUEPA, 2014: 24). • The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for elementary education reports an increase from 81.6% in 2000-01 to 97% in 2013-2014 (Table 2.2.3: 26). • The dropout rate for elementary education (Class I-VIII) declined from 53.7% to 42.3% between 2000-01 and 2008-09 (Figure 2.2.25: 46). • An increase in the number of upper-primary schools resulted in an improved transition rate from 81.1% in 2007-08 to 86.7% in 2012-13 (Refer Figure 2.2.28: 48).	• The number of out-of-school children (OoSC) in the age group of 6-14 has declined steadily from 6.94% in 2005-06 to 4.28% in 2009-10 (p. 44). • The dropout rate was 24.9% in primary education in 2008-09 and hence remains a major challenge (Figure 2.2.24: 46).

GOAL-3:	Facilitating development of "young people and adults through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes" (UNESCOb, 2015: 51).	• The success of SSA in achieving substantial progress towards UEE brought in its wake the challenge of assisting physical mobility of students from elementary to secondary and higher secondary education. Hence, substantial increase in enrolment resulted (from 27.6 million to 59.6 million) (NUEPA, 2014, Table 2.3.1: 53). • The youth literacy rate (15-24 years) improved substantially from 76.43% in 2001 to 86.14% in 2011 (NUEPA, 2014, Figure 2.3.3: 61). • The UNESCO data report for 2015 states that the youth literacy rate for India is 89.65% (Refer UNESCO website).	However, despite considerable increase wide regional differentials in youth literacy rate remain (NUEPA, 2014: 61).
GOAL-4:	Aims at achieving a 50% increase in the levels of adult education by the year 2015 while bridging gender disparity It also aims at facilitating equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (UNESCOb, 2015: 2).	• The adult literacy (age 15 years and above) has increased considerably from 69.3% in 2011 to 72.13% in 2015 (NUEPA, 2014: 68)	• Nevertheless, gender and regional disparities continues to persist.

GOAL-5: (UNESCO, 2015: 2)	Bridging "gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015" (UNESCOb, 2015: 2).	• Substantial progress has been made towards gender parity in elementary and secondary education between 2000-01 and 2013-14. For instance, the enrolment of girls in elementary education increased from 43% to 48.3% between 2000-01 and 2013-14 (Table 2.5.1: 73).	• A marked difference persists at the secondary stage where the enrolment for girls still remains at 47.1% in-spite of an increase from 38.3% in 2000-01 to 2013-14 NUEPA, 2014: 73).
GOAL-6: (UNESCO, 2015: 3)	Ensuring physical access and equity while improving all aspects of quality of education "so that recognizable and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills" (UNESCO, 2015: 3).	• "Improvements in the quality of education have been limited, in spite of various efforts. For instance, the National Achievement Survey (NAS) for Class-V 2012, have highlighted slow progress towards better learning outcomes in terms of literacy and numeracy skills" (UNESCOb, 2015: 3).	

(*Refer:* NUEPA, 2014 and UNESCO, 2015)

Appendix 2: Policy and Quality related critical questions

Crucial guiding questions outlined below are relevant to the current study. They assisted with conducting a review of policy documents relevant to education and designing of the curriculum policy document in the data analysis phase. While few of the questions were adapted from the 2013-UNESCO Quality Monitoring handbook, others have been formulated for answering crucial questions relevant for analysing achievement of quality education.

A. Crucial questions relevant to the **policy analysis framework** have been outlined below:

- In what way are the education policies (NPE 1986/92) and planning programmes (SSA) consistent with the aspirations of overall educational development? Are they achievable (being consistent with existing capacity, human resources, structures and finance)? (UNESCO, 2013: 25)
- To what degree are the existing legislation (RTE Act 2009), policies (NPE 1986/92) and planning programmes (SSA) consistent with each other? To what extent have the policy documents reviewed policy texts been based on information and research evidence? (UNESCO, 2013: 25)
- "Does the policy strategy and plan provide for development across different education sectors? Are there any neglected or non-prioritized areas or aspects that may emerge as potential problems or bottlenecks?" (UNESCO, 2013: 25)
- Have the various actors and stakeholders in education policymaking and planning been fairly represented? Have these processes been participatory and consultative? Have they allowed all relevant stakeholders to voice their concerns? (UNESCO, 2013: 25-26)

B. Crucial questions relevant for critically analysing **curriculum policy document reform** have been outlined below:

- "Has there been a recent review of the national curriculum policy document"? If yes, what changes were made during the review process? (UNESCO, 2013: 31)
- "How is the national curriculum policy document developed, updated and renewed? And, how is the content of the curricular decided? Does the curriculum development process involve all relevant stakeholders?" (UNESCO, 2013: 31)
- "Does the curriculum allow enough flexibility to incorporate local content at the sub-national or school levels, to meet the diverse learning needs of learners [particularly at the primary level]?" (UNESCO, 2013: 31, my parentheses)
- "Are there provisions for bilingual or multilingual education at the primary level?" "Do the teaching and learning materials (TLMs) reflect the [primary] curriculum? How frequently are curricular materials reviewed and updated? "(UNESCO, 2013: 32)
- "What teaching-learning methods are most commonly used at the primary level? Rote learning? Competency-based? In what ways do they hinder or facilitate student learning? Are teachers properly trained in using participatory and interactive teaching methods [particularly for primary children]?" (UNESCO, 2013: 32, my parentheses)

C. Certain crucial questions, relating to **demographic, social, economic and political context** have been outlined below:

- "How does India's existing education curriculum policy (NCF-2005) take into account the country's demographic (sex and age), socio-economic, ethnic, religious and linguistic characteristics of the population?" (UNESCO, 2013: 13). How does the social, economic and political factor play up against effective implementation of the NCF-2005?
- What kind of political and governmental institutional framework exists in India? How stable is the functioning of the political system? And lastly, what implications does the political system have on the education policy process? (UNESCO, 2013: 15)

D. Crucial guiding questions related to **learning achievements** identified are:

- How is the student learning achievement monitored for primary student in India? "Does the country organize national assessments of learning achievement [at the primary level]?" (p.32, my parentheses)
- "Is there continuous monitoring of student learning? What is the balance between formative and summative evaluations of student learning?" (p.32)
- "Do students from any particular population group(s) under-perform in examinations?" (p.32). Is there regular measurement of performance indicators? For students and schools? (p.32)

(UNESCO, 2013)

E. Over-arching questions on policy and quality with respect to curriculum reform in India:

1. Crucial questions applying **Policy lens:**

- In what way has the NCF-2005 tried to address social and cultural issues and needs, particularly at the primary level?
- Are the measures of quality in NCF-2005 actually measuring what has been agreed upon in the definition of quality at the national and international levels? Are there some proxy measures?
- How does the NCF-2005 address provision of quality education? Or does it substitute quality in terms of indicators?
- To what extent does the national curriculum policy document integrate commitments to achieve the sixth goal of EFA goal? What measures have been put in place for successfully achieving them?
- Have adequate resources been mobilized? What are the gaps or spaces still remaining? And, how are they being addressed?
- What are the remaining inconsistencies at the primary level, particularly in terms of policy goals and implementation strategies?
- To what extent has the NCF-2005 been designed based on research evidence?
- In what way have national exams and findings been used to inform or shape policies and/or to improve learning inputs, processes

and achievement, particularly at the primary level?

2. Crucial questions applying **Quality lens:**

- Is evaluation the cornerstones on which quality education at the primary level is addressed?
- What is the level of participation of the marginalized population groups at the primary education level? What obstacles do they face in terms of access to education?
- Does international testing determine what goes into the curriculum at the primary level?
- Have different pedagogic practices been considered as central crucial indicators for provision of quality education?
- Does teacher training, teaching and learning measures, and national assessment surveys play a crucial role in how curriculum reform is addressed in India?
- What systemic support been put into place for achieving quality education? What central role do they play in further bolstering quality education?

F. Issues with respect to the Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs) were addressed through the guiding questions outlined below:

- What features have been incorporated in QMTs in relation to provision of quality primary education? Have crucial features directly responsible for quality education been addressed?
- "Are the specific indicators by which each general feature is elaborated and operationalized appropriate?" (Alexander, 2008: 14)
- How consistently are the indicators going to be interpreted by their users for allowing monitoring purpose to be properly served?

- What motivated the conceptual and/or empirical basis for the various dimensions, features and indicators within QMT, particularly with respect to quality primary education? Can these dimensions, features and/or indicators be justified?
- "Is the QMT procedure- involving as it does fourteen monitoring formats and three analytical sheets at five levels from state to school up to four times each year-manageable?" (Alexander, 2008: 14)

Appendix 3: School stages and curricular areas

Subjects	Broad guiding aims for each subject	Levels of Education			
		Primary level (Grade-I-V)	**Upper-primary level (Grades-V-VIII)**	**Secondary education (Grades-VIII-X)**	**Higher education (Grades-XI-XII)**
LANGUAGE (core subject)	- Language skills, such as, **speech, listening, reading and writing** should cut across other subjects and disciplines (p.40). This affects success at school. - "Three language formula", (referring to spread of multilingualism), should be implemented in schools (NCF 2005: 37). This comprises of **the child's home language(s) or mother tongue(s), which NCF-2005 argues** should be the medium of learning in schools (p.37). **- English, as a second-language**, needs to finds its place along with other Indian languages. - English should cut across the curriculum at the primary education level. - The multilingual character of Indian society should be seen as a resource for the enrichment of school life. - Include Braille and Sign language for learners without disability (p.38). The teaching approach should be mutually supportive "within a broad cognitive philosophy (incorporating Vygotsky, Chomskyan and Piagetian principles)" (NCF 2005: 39). - At the **primary level** children should be taught in home language(s) those belonging to **linguist minority groups.** **-** To inculcate honour and respect for home language(s), particularly amongst teachers. **- The Home/First/Mother tongue must be accepted as they as (p.38).** During this process of learning **if mistakes are made children will correct themselves** (p.38).				
	- Teaching and learning mathematics should involve "**mathematisation"**	- Curriculum should facilitate making a connection between	- Application of powerful concepts in continuation	- Mathematics treated as a discipline - Students' become familiar with defining terms and concepts,	- Appreciate application of mathematical concepts - Favouring an increase in the **breadth rather than the depth of**

MATHEMA-TICS (core subject)	(logical thinking, handling abstract thinking) rather than imparting "knowledge' of mathematics in a formal and mechanical manner (NCF 2005: 42). - Learning mathematics should enhance learner's ability to think and reason, to visualise and handle abstractions, to formulate and solve problems. - It advocates for the curriculum to be ambitious (developing critical thinking) and coherent (skills and methods that cohere with other subjects).	mathematics and everyday thinking (p.44) - Games, stories and puzzles to help develop the above. - "Mathematics is not arithmetic" (NCF 2005: 45) -The curriculum should be explicit in incorporating the progression from the concrete to the abstract along with concept learning (p.45).	with previously learnt concepts. - Revisiting concepts and skills learnt at the primary stages - Curriculum includes algebraic notion, shapes and Data handling (p.45) - Enrich students' spatial reasoning and visualisation skills (p.45).	usage of symbols and precisely stated and proofs justifying proposition - Geometry and Algebra crucial bits of the mathematics curriculum (p.45). - Develop problem-solving ability through previous skills learnt. - Individual and group exploration and visual learning.	**coverage of contents** due to the wide application of the subject (p.45) - The topics covered **should arouse interest and curiosity** (p.45).

	- It advocates that mathematics teaching must be **activity-oriented.**				
SCIENCE (core subject)	- Content, process language and pedagogical practices of science teaching **must be commensurate** with the learner's age-range and cognitive reach (p.46-47). - Scientific teaching should nurture child's curiosity and creativity, particularly with respect to the environment. - Teaching should be placed in the **wider context of the children's environment** for facilitating gaining knowledge and skills	- Engaging learners in acquiring methods and processes for promoting "joyfully" exploration and harmonisation with the world. (p.48) - No formal periodic tests, no awarding of marks or grades, and no detention should be awarded to learners throughout primary stage (p.48).	- An important component of pedagogy should entail "group activities, discussions with peers and teachers, surveys, organization of data and their display through exhibition" (p.48) - The curriculum should not be a "diluted version" of secondary school science curriculum (p.48).	- Engage with learning science as a composite learning. - Pedagogic practice should involve experimentation which connects theoretical principles with the local context.	- Emphasis on experiments, technology and problem solving. - Science subject introduced as a separate discipline. -Rationalisation of the curriculum for avoiding steep gradient between secondary and higher-secondary syllabi. (p.49) - Teachers should incorporate current advances in the field into their teaching -Avoid covering a large number of topics superficially

	for easy transition to the world of work. - The entire science school curriculum should integrate environmental studies along with essential health components. (p.48)	- The science curriculum should help develop basic language skills: speaking, reading and writing. (p.48)	- Continuous, and periodic assessment (unit tests, term-ends tests). - No detention for students. - Every child who **attends eight years of schools** should be promoted to Grade-IX (p.48)		

SOCIAL SCIENCE (core subject)	-The curriculum should contain a knowledge base that promotes a "just and peaceful society" (p.50). -Social science content should focus on developing independent and critical understanding of economic, political and societal issues. -Deviate from memorization of information for examination to conceptual understanding. -Creating job opportunities by developing skills of creativity and analysis through the social science curriculum.	- Natural and social science are integrated alongside physical, biological, social and cultural spheres. - Illustrative, discussion-oriented and participative methods should be used during teaching. - The language used should be gender sensitive. - For Grades III to V a new subject called Environmental Science (EVS) for building	- Contain contents from History, Geography, political science and economics. - Deeper understanding of the social and economic challenges, such as, poverty, child-labour, illiteracy, and various dimensions of inequality. - Content should be made to relate to leaner's everyday life (p.53). - History content should assist in the learner getting	-Social Science contain content from History, Geography, political science, sociology and psychology. -Commerce includes business studies and accountancy. -Learner's offered choice of subjects depending who wants to continue with formal education or opt for vocational education. This choice is also made available dependent on the learner's interest, -Content inclusive of knowledge and necessary skills needed by respective students.	-Social Science contain content from History, Geography, political science, sociology and psychology. -Commerce includes business studies and accountancy. -Learner's offered choice of subjects depending who wants to continue with formal education or opt for vocational education. This choice is also made available dependent on the learner's interest. -Content inclusive of knowledge and necessary skills needed by respective students.

	-The curriculum should be incorporate relevant local content in the teaching-learning process (p.50). - Interdisciplinary approaches wherever possible, promoting key national concerns, such as, gender (with respect to women), justice, human rights, and sensitivity to marginalised groups and minorities should be facilitated (p.51). -Civics should be recast as political science. Also, the significance of history as a shaping influence on the children's conception of the	consciousness about the environment. - "Content to reflect day-to-day experiences of children and their life world" (p.52) -Contain contents from History, Geography, political science and economics. - History will emphasise the concept of plurality. Also, formation and functioning of governments at the local and global level will be introduced to the learner.	an understanding of the rich and varied past therefore, enabling them to better understand their world. - Develop analytical and conceptual skills with examples from modern and contemporary India and other parts of the world. - Develop an in-depth understanding of the Indian Constitution, such as, the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a		

	past and civic identity should be recognised (p.51).	- Through Geography and Political science students will be introduced to issues related to environment, resources and development at different levels, local, state, and central levels. - Economics will enable students to observe economic institutions like the market and the state (p.53)	democratic and secular society (p.53).		

COMPUTER SCIENCE	- NCF-2005 recognises that the integration of Information Technology (IT) curriculum into schools is vital. - Advocates for teachers, curriculum developers, educators and evaluators to harness the potential of incorporating and utilising the full-potential of ICT for benefiting the learner. (NCF 2005: 45-46)		
ART EDUCATION (core subject)	- Arts education comprises of a "folk and classical forms of music and dance, theatre, puppetry, day work, visual arts and crafts from different regions of India" (NCF 2005: 55). These should be an important part of learning in the curriculum. - The arts curriculum should promote "aesthetic quality and experience" (p.56). - The approach to learning arts should be participatory, interactive and experiential rather	- Music, dance and art, at the primary and pre-primary level, contribute to the development of "self, both cognitive and social" (p.56). - Arts facilitates learning of "language, exploration of nature and understanding of the self" in children (p.56). - Block periods of approximately one and a half hour to be allocated for art for theatre, dance, and clay work.	- Facilitates specializing in some areas of their interest. - Theory of art and aesthetics introduced, for deepening appreciation and significance of this area of knowledge, at this level. - The +2 stage promotes specialized arts education, where students who wish to pursue a career in that, can do so.

	than instructive (p.55). - All four streams of art-music, dance, visual arts and theatre- "should" be an integral part of the school curriculum (up to Grade-X). It should also be a subject at every stage.		
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (core subject)	"Health is influenced by biological, social, economic, cultural and political factors" (p.56) Hence, through health and physical education (including yoga) issues, such as, enrolment, retention, and school completion rates significantly can be effectively addressed.	- Compulsory at the primary and upper-primary stage. - Yoga introduced in informal ways up to Grade-III. It is introduced as formal education from Grade-IV.	- Compulsory at the secondary stage - Optional at the higher-secondary stage.

	- Under-nourishment and communicable diseases should be addressed from pre-primary to the higher-secondary stages with particular attention to social groups and girl children. - No slashing of time in schools for yoga and games (core part of curriculum) (p.57). - Age-appropriate context-specific interventions focused on adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns, including HIV/AIDS and drug/substance abuse, therefore, are needed to provide children opportunities to		

	construct knowledge and acquire life-skills, for coping with processes of growing up" (p.57).		
EDUCA-TION FOR PEACE	- Education for peace seeks to inculcate, values, attitudes and skills for addressing equality and social justice, particularly, for the poor and the underprivileged. - Peace-oriented values should be promoted through relevant activities in all subjects throughout the school years (p.62). - Peace education should make the learners not only peace consumers but also peace makers (p.62). - Peace education should form a component of teacher education.		
HABITAT AND LEARNING	Environmental education may be best pursued by infusing the issues and concerns of the environment into the teaching of different disciplines at all levels while ensuring that adequate time is earmarked for pertinent activities.		

(Refer: **NCF 2005, 30-70)**

Appendix 4: School Monitoring Format Sheet under the Quality Monitoring Tool

SMF

SCHOOL MONITORING FORMAT

(To be completed by Head of School and to be sent to CRC Coordinator for each quarter)

Quarter under Report | I | II | III | IV | Year | | | | | - | | |

Period of quarter ..... to.....

General Guidelines

1. Please answer all questions.
2. Unanswered questions/blank spaces left will mean that the activity did not held/ information is nil.
3. Information provided should belong to the current quarter under report only.
4. Completed SMF should be submitted to the CRC. One copy should be retained by the school.

Section A: School Information

1. (a) CRC _____ BRC _____ District _____ State _____

   (b) Name of school with address _____

2. School type *(Mark √ on any one)* | I - V | | VI - VIII | | I - VIII | | Any other | | |

3. No. of Teachers:

		In Position	Required Posts (As per RTE Norms)
(a) Primary Teachers	(i) Regular		
	(ii) Contractual		
(b) Upper Primary Teachers	(i) Regular	Subjects.....	
	(ii) Contractual	Subjects.....	

Section B: Enrolment and Attendance

4. Please provide information about enrolment and attendance of students.

Class	Enrolment			Average daily attendance in last month (Month.....)			Percentage of average daily attendance for last month (%)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
I									
II									
III									
IV									
V									
VI									
VII									
VIII									
Total									

$$\textit{Average daily attendance in the month} = \frac{\textit{Sum of number of students present in the month}}{\textit{Number of working days}}$$

$$\textit{Percentage of average daily attendance} = \frac{\textit{Average daily attendance in the month} \times 100}{\textit{Enrolment of students}}$$

5. What is the number of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in your school? ☐

6. (a) Write the number of out-of-school children admitted to age appropriate classes under RTE.

   Boys: ☐ Girls: ☐

   (b) Where are these children undergoing special training (please mark √)

   (i) In your school ☐

   (ii) In non-residential centre run by NGOs or government NGO ☐ Govt. ☐

   (iii) In a residential centre run by NGO or govt. NGO ☐ Govt. ☐

   (iv) Any other.....

7. Steps taken by the school to improve students' attendance.

_____

_____

Section C: Curriculum Transaction

8. Please complete the table for all teachers working in the school stating:
   (a) What chapter of the textbook is being taught by each teacher (for each subject)?
   (b) Whether the coverage of curriculum/ textbooks so far, is adequate to complete the class curriculum within the academic year for each teacher and subject he/she teaches?

   (If need be, additional column/ row/ sheet may be added.)

S. No.	Name of teacher	Class	Subjects / textbooks	Chapter number and name	Coverage (Mark √)	
					Adequate	Inadequate
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

9. When were textbooks distributed to students after beginning of the session? (Mark √)

(a) Within one week ☐ (b) Within one month ☐

(c) After one month ☐ (d) Not applicable for this quarter ☐

10. Mention the reasons for late distribution of textbooks (if any).

_____

11. (a) Number of teachers who received teacher (TLM) grant of Rs. 500/- for the year* ☐

(b) Number of teachers who are developing TLM and using them in classroom teaching* ☐

12. Utilization of teacher (TLM) grant by the teachers*:

(a) Name the TLM or material for preparing TLM purchased from teacher grant_____

_____

(b) Name TLM items developed by teachers themselves _____

_____

13. Mention at least two initiatives adopted by teachers for improving teaching and learning processes.

_____

14. How do you ensure gender sensitive and gender positive environment in school about the following? (Write details)

(a) Participation in learning through activities, discovery and exploration

.....

(b) Participation in games and sports

.....

(c) Availability of gender sensitive library and supplementary reading material

.....

(d) Any other .....

* If applicable

15. How do you ensure participation of SC children in school? (Give details)

(a) Participation in learning through activities, discovery and exploration

.....

(b) Participation in games and sports

.....

(c) Any other .....

16. How do you ensure participation of ST children in school? (Give details)

(a) Participation in learning through activities, discovery and exploration

.....

(b) Participation in games and sports

.....

(c) Any other .....

17. Mention specific efforts (at least two) for making classroom inclusive (CWSN).

Section D: Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

18. (a) Has the school been given formats by State/UT government for CCE progress report cards? | Yes | No |

(b) Are pupil wise progress report cards being maintained by school? | Yes | No |

(c) What is the periodicity of updating these report cards?

(d) When were students' report cards shared last with pupils' parents?

Section E: Teacher Training

19. (a) Are teachers using the training inputs in classrooms / school? | Yes | No |

(b) If yes, in what way? _____

_____

_____

(c) If no, why? _____

_____

20. Give suggestions for upcoming training programmes.

_____

_____

_____

Section F: Functioning of School Management Committee (SMC)

21. Has SMC been constituted for your school? | Yes | No |

22. Whether members of SMC were given training about their roles and functions? | Yes | No |

23. (a) Whether School Development Plan has been prepared? | Yes | No |

(b) If yes, whether members of the SMC were involved in preparation of this plan? | Yes | No |

Section G: Learners' Assessment

24. **Please provide children's assessment data in the format used in your school and enclose the same (CCE format). Following format is given as an example only**

(a) Details of Learners' Achievement, class-wise and subject-wise for Classes I-V for last term/quarter/month.

EXAMPLE: (Please do not use this format as it is. Provide information in the format used in your school)

Class	Subject*	No. of children assessed	Grade** /Level***	Boys		Girls		Total	
				No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I	Language		A						
			B						
			C						
			Total						100
	Mathematics		A		EXAMPLE				
			B						
			C						
			Total						100
	EVS		A						
			B						
			C						
			Total						100
II									
III									
IV									
V									

*Add subjects for all classes

** Primary: Grades; A= 70% and above, B= 30%-69%, C= below 30%

$$Percentage\ of\ boys\ in\ grade\ A = \frac{Number\ of\ boys\ scoring\ grade\ A \times 100}{Number\ of\ children\ assessed}$$

***Level –

Level I – Children performance haven't reached the expected level.
Level II – Children needs support (elders) to reach the expected level.
Level III – Children performance as per expected level.
Level IV – Children performance beyond expectation.

(b) Details of Learners' Achievements, class-wise and subject-wise for Classes VI-VIII for last term/quarter/month.

EXAMPLE: (Please do not use this format as it is. Provide information in the format used in your school)

Class	Subject*	No. of children assessed	Grade**/Level***	Boys		Girls		Total	
				No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
VI	Language		A						
			B						
			C						
			D						
			E						
			Total						100
	Mathematics		A						
			B						
			C						
			D						
			E						
			Total						100
	Science		A						
			B						
			C						
			D						
			E						
			Total						100
	Social Science		A						
			B						
			C						
			D						
			E						
			Total						100
			A						
			B						
			C						
			D						
			E						
			Total						100
VII									
VIII									

*Add subjects for all classes;

** Upper Primary: Grades A= 80% and above, B= 65%-79%, C= 50%-64%, D=35%-49%, E= below 35%

***Level –

Level I – Children performance haven't reached the expected level.

Level II – Children needs support (elders) to reach the expected level.

Level III – Children performance as per expected level.

Level IV – Children performance beyond expectation.

Date.....

Name and Signature of Head Teacher

8

(NCERT, 2015: 1-8)