LIVED EXPERIENCES IN CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS OF GOVERNMENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN ODISHA

By

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List of Publications arising from the thesis

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DEDICATIONS

To my father, Mr Parameswar Apat, for believing in me and never questioning my desire to pursue the 'Arts'.

To my mother, Mrs Nalini Apat, who continues asking when I will finish my schooling.

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CONTENTS

Page No.

SUMMARY……………………………………………………………………… 1

LIST OF FIGURES……………………………………………………………3

LIST OF TABLES………………………………………………………………..4

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ……………………………………………………5

CHAPTER 1: Introduction ………………………………………………………...6

1.1 Teachers' lives: An area of research………………………………….……...….8

1.2 Early Career Teachers…………………………………………………………..12

1.3 An overview of the Indian education system ……………………………….…..16

1.4 Being a government schoolteacher in contemporary India ……………………25

1.4.1 From object of worship to object of ridicule ……………………………26

1.5 Contract teacher hiring policy in Odisha ………………………………………31

1.6 Research questions…………………………………………………….……..33

1.7 Research design………………………………………………………………...33

1.8 Overview of chapters…………………………………………………….. 35

CHAPTER 2: Literature review…………………………………………...…..37

2.1 Studies on teachers' lives………………………………………………………38

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of teachers' work………………………………………39

2.1.2 Teachers' sense of self-efficacy…………………………………………40

2.1.3 Teacher commitment……………………………………………………41

2.1.4 Teacher identity…………………………………………………………43

2.1.5 Teacher vulnerability……………………………………………………45

2.1.6 Deprofessionalisation, deskilling, and demoralisation……………………46

2.2 Studies on early career teachers………………………………………………49

2.3 Studies on teachers' lives in the Indian context…………………………………55

2.3.1 Teacher images in India………………………………………………………56

2.3.2 Reasons for becoming a teacher……………………………………………59

2.3.3 Preparedness for teaching……………………………………………….....60

2.3.4 Teacher's working conditions…………………………………..……..61

2.3.5 Teachers' attitudes and beliefs…………………………………………..64

2.3.6 Teachers' work and accountability……………………………………….…..….66
2.4 Studies on contract teachers…………………………………………..……..68
2.4.1 The emergence of contract teacher recruitment policy ...…………….…………70
2.4.2 Prevalence of contract teacher recruitment in India and Odisha... ………...72
2.4.3 The effectiveness of contract teacher recruitment policy…………………..74
2.4.4 Contractual employment and precarity..……………………………………76
2.5 Conclusion ……………………………………………..…………….……....77

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical background………………………………………..…80
3.1 Critical realism……………………………………………………………....80
3.2 Archer's social realism…………………………………………………….....83
3.3 Against transcendence, for emergence; the morphogenetic/morphostatic framework…………………………………………………………………………..85
3.4 A humanist and stratified model of 'people'………………………………………87
3.5 Constraints and enablements…………………………………………………90
3.5.1 Involuntaristic placement……………………………………...……91
3.5.2 Vested interests ……………………………………………………..91
3.5.3 Opportunity costs………………………………………………………...92
3.5.4 Degrees of interpretative freedom……………………………………..92
3.6 Concerns, projects, and practices……………………………………………93
3.7 Acquiring a social identity…………………………………………………96
3.7.1 PI → SI……………………………………………………………..96
3.7.2 SI → PI……………………………………………………………..97
3.7.3 PI ↔ SI……………………………………………………………..98
3.8 Reformulating the research questions ………………………………………99

CHAPTER 4: Methodology ……………………………………………………..100
4.1 "My world"……………………………………………………………....100
4.2 Ontological and epistemological considerations…………………………………101
4.3 Research approach……………………………………………………………102
4.4 Research design……………………………………...………………..107
4.5 Challenges of working with teachers' narratives…………………………………109
4.6 Context of the study……………………………...……………………113
4.7 Selection of participants……………………………………………………117

4.8 Access and fieldwork…………………………………………………………………118

4.9 Analysis …………………………………………………………………………121

4.10 Research quality ……………………………………………………………..123

4.11 Ethics ……………………………………………………………..…………125

CHAPTER 5: Becoming a contract teacher……………………………………………127

5.1 Snapshots from the everyday lives of the participants…………………………..127

5.1.1 Exhausting routines ………………………………………..………..127

5.1.2 Lackadaisical attitudes…………………………………………………129

5.1.3 Vulnerable moments…………………………………………….….131

5.2 Projects aimed at obtaining employment……………………………………...136

5.2 Conclusion…………………………………………………………..………..145

CHAPTER 6: Surviving as a contract teacher…………………………………………147

6.1 Contractual job: A poem………………………………………………………147

6.2 Difficulties encountered upon arrival…………………………………………148

6.3 (Un)expected satisfactions……………………………………………………150

6.4 (Un)expected dissatisfactions………………………………………..…….153

6.4.1 Inadequate school resources and infrastructure……………………………155

6.4.2 Inadequate family support for learning……………………………………157

6.4.3 The burden of non-teaching workload……………………………………159

6.4.4 Salary woes…………………………………………………………..163

6.4.5 Sense of Inferiority…………………………………………………..168

6.4.6 Anxiety about the possibility of transfer…………………………………..169

6.4.7 Fractured solidarity…………………………………………………..171

6.4.8 Being a female teacher ………………………………………………172

6.4.9 The desire for course correction………………………………………..176

6.5 Conclusion……………………………………………………………………177

CHAPTER 7: Thriving as a contract teacher…………………………………………..181

7.1 Overcoming fear and developing self-confidence………………………………182

7.2 Prioritising non-teaching work over teaching……………………………………186

7.3 Managing emotions……………………………………………………………187

7.4 Personification………………………………………………………..…188

7.5 Preparing for promotion……………………………………………………………….191

7.6 Deriving self-worth……………………………………………………………………193

7.7 Exercising corporate agency…………………………………………………………..196

7.8 Ultimate concerns……………………………………………………………………..198

7.9 Conclusion…………………………………………………………………………….204

CHAPTER 8: Constraints and enablements in the working lives of early career teachers ……………………………………………………………………...……208

8.1 Student absenteeism, parental apathy, and problems within students' families….209

8.2 Learning deficit among students………………………………………………………211

8.3 Inadequate staffing in schools…………………………………………………………212

8.4 Unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations of the government………...214

8.5 No punishment and no detention policies…………………………………………..215

8.6 Insufficient rewards and arbitrary sanctions for teachers………………………...218

8.7 Student-friendly but not teacher-friendly policymaking…………………………220

8.8 Lack of respect and support from communities…………………………………….221

8.9 In-service training……………………………………………………………….....222

8.10 Availability of smartphones……………………...…………………………..224

8.11 Conclusion…………………………………………………………………...……227

CHAPTER 9: Conclusion…………………………………………………………..229

9.1 Summary of findings ……………………………………………………………………229

9.2 Discussion……………………………………………………………………………..234

9.3 Limitations and transferability…………………………………………………...240

9.4 Policy implications……………………………………………………………………241

9.5 Recommendations for further research ……………………………………………242

REFERENCES……………………………………………………………………...244

Annexure 1: Questionnaire and interview guide……………………………………273

Annexure 2: Permission from DEO, Keonjhar for fieldwork……………..……..284

Annexure 3: Oral informed consent script…………………………………………...285

SUMMARY

This study has been prompted by three factors: the criticism of teachers working in government schools in India for the deteriorating condition of government schools, the endorsement of the contract teacher hiring policy as effective and cost-efficient and its widespread acceptance by several state governments, and the lack of research on teachers' lives and lived experiences in the Indian context. This study examines the lives of early career teachers working in elementary schools in Odisha. These teachers are employed on a contract basis, and after six years of service they are included in the regular teacher workforce. Research has found that the early years of teachers' careers are usually characterised as a period of 'survival' and 'discovery'. This thesis contends that the early years of teaching can become a period of precarity when teachers are hired on contract.

The study analyses narrative data obtained through semistructured interviews and FGDs with seventeen contract teachers employed in government-run elementary schools in Odisha. Margaret Archer's theorisation of the interplay between structure and agency provides the framework for data analysis. This thesis seeks to explain how and why the participants chose to become contract teachers, how they managed to survive and thrive as contract teachers, and what structural and cultural constraints and enablements facilitated or hindered their work.

The analysis suggests that not all participants became teachers because of the inherent merits of the profession. For many, being a government employee was more significant than being a teacher. However, for most participants, contractual employment contributed to precarious living circumstances and their social identity as government school teachers was insufficient to provide them with a sense of self-worth. Their satisfactions included positive relationships with colleagues, the opportunity to exercise autonomy in the classroom, and the availability of guidebooks and in-service training. The list of dissatisfactions participants encountered during

Biswajit-Apu

their initial years of employment is longer than the list of satisfactions. Many complained about the inadequate school resources and infrastructure, indifferent parents and non-teaching workload. Living off their low income was probably the most challenging aspect of participants' lives. The salary was not just inadequate to make the ends meet, but irregular as well. Due to their contractual status, most teachers felt inferior. Several participants reported being discriminated against by regular teachers. Younger participants were disenchanted with their current jobs and preparing for different careers. According to some female participants, locals could easily harass them, while male teachers felt that female teachers were often negligent.

Participants' viewed teaching in government school as a risky profession and adopted many strategies to overcome fear such as prioritising non-teaching work over teaching. Participants' personification of their roles as teachers offered insights into how their personal concerns contributed to their professional image. The ultimate concerns of participants, arising from their unique circumstances, indicated how their social identity as contract teachers aligned with their personal concerns. Many of the constraints they encountered were intertwined and reinforced by one another. They reported that student absenteeism, parental apathy, problems within students' families, shortages of teachers, the no-punishment and no-detention policy, government's unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations complicated their work. The provision of in-service training was an enablement for participants in multiple ways.

Besides arguing for the need to reconsider the policy of hiring contract teachers in Odisha and elsewhere, the study challenges the dominant narrative that condemns teachers for deteriorating education in government schools. The study also makes recommendations for improving teacher education and teacher management practices. It highlights the need for further research into the identity, commitment, demoralisation and precarity of teachers in India.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Change in the designation of contract teachers	32
Figure 2.1	Teacher images in India	57
Figure 2.2	Theory of change underpinning contract teacher hiring policy	69
Figure 2.3	Heatmap of the percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in India	73
Figure 2.4	Percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in Odisha	73
Figure 3.1	An iceberg metaphor for the stratified ontology of critical realism	82
Figure 3.2	Critical realist view of causation	82
Figure 3.3	The basic morphogenetic/morphostatic sequence	86
Figure 3.4	Time span under consideration in conflationary theories versus morphogenetic approach	86
Figure 3.5	Emergence in human beings	88
Figure 3.6	Establishing a modus vivendi in a particular socio-cultural context	95
Figure 3.7	Social identity assigned its place within personal identity	98
Figure 4.1	Location of Keonjhar	114
Figure 4.2	Number of schools in Keonjhar in terms of total teaching staff	117
Figure 6.1	Contrast between being a contract teacher and a regular teacher	167

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Different conceptions of phases in teachers' careers	13
Table 1.2	Revisions in the salaries of contract teachers (in Rs. per month)	32
Table 2.1	Domains of disappointment for teachers	49
Table 2.2	Difference between early career teachers' expectations and experiences	53
Table 2.3	Number and percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in India and Odisha	74
Table 4.1	Basic demographic data of Keonjhar vis-à-vis Odisha and India	114
Table 4.2	Literacy rate in Keonjhar vis-à-vis Odisha and India	115
Table 4.3	Social category of teachers in Keonjhar	116
Table 4.4	School category-wise distribution of teachers in Keonjhar	116
Table 4.5	Teachers working in rural and urban schools of Keonjhar	116
Table 4.6	Characteristics of participants	119
Table 4.7	Phases of thematic analysis	122
Table 5.1	Educational levels and occupations of the participants' parents	137

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABEO	Assistant Block Education Officer
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
BEO	Block Education Officer
BLO	Booth Level Officer
CEP	Cultural emergent property
CRCC	Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator
CT	Teachers' Certificate
D.El.Ed	Diploma in Elementary Education
DEO	District Education Officer
DMF	District Mineral Foundation
DPC	District Project Coordinator
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
HM	Head Master
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JT	Junior Teacher
JTC	Junior Teacher Contractual
MDM	Mid Day Meal Scheme
ME	Middle English School
NEP	National Education Policy
OTET	Odisha Teacher Eligibility Test
PEP	Personal emergent property
PGDCA	Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Application
PGT	Post-Graduate Teacher.
PI	Personal identity
RTE	Right to Education Act
SEBC	Socially and Economically Backward Classes
SEP	Structural emergent property
SI	Social identity
SMC	School Management Committee
SS	Sikhya Sahayak
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TGT	Trained Graduate Teacher
TLM	Teaching/Learning Materials
UDISE	Unified District Information System for Education

Chapter 1

Introduction

September 2018. A group of teachers from Odisha had called for a state-wide strike. Thousands of the striking teachers had gathered in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, and their strike had lasted for weeks. The teachers were *Sikhya Sahayaks* - trained and qualified teachers hired on contract at a fraction of the salary of regular teachers. As *Sikhya Sahayaks*, they would serve for six years before being promoted to permanent teachers. Their protest was in response to the discriminatory pay and benefits structure compared with regular teachers in government schools. This strike was neither the first nor the last of its kind. In the past few years, the *Sikhya Sahayaks* had protested several times.

The strike intensified with each passing day, but the government remained defiant. At one point, a local TV news station aired a debate on this strike, in which one of the participants accused the striking teachers of being ungrateful and selfish. He grumbled, "Why did these people decide to become teachers in the first place? Were they not aware of the compensation and benefits they would receive? Of course, they were aware, and yet they chose to join. Is it appropriate for them to protest now and disrupt the education of thousands of children? Furthermore, if they believe they can earn more by doing something else rather than teaching, why don't they resign?"

I watched this program with my father, who appeared to concur with the panellists' opinions. It was my conviction that, like my father and the panellist, a significant portion of the state's population could not sympathise with the striking teachers at that time for two reasons. As the strike dragged on, education was disrupted in many schools in the state. In the eyes of many, the striking teachers were selfish, fighting for their vested interests at the expense of the education of children.

Secondly, the notion that teachers were inept, indifferent, frequently absent, and even corrupt contributed to the negative popular perception of the strike. It was widely believed that teachers were self-obsessed and difficult to please. My initial impression was that the allegations against teachers might not be entirely unfounded (there are several academic studies discussed later which do identify problems with teacher accountability), but portraying them as troublemakers for raising their concerns was disturbing. The strike prompted me to investigate the plight of the 'troublemakers'. With the panellist, I asked why teachers chose to be contract teachers when the job entailed so much difficulty. As early career teachers, what challenges do they face while navigating the educational system? How do they handle the dissatisfaction of being contract teachers? How do they stay motivated? I wanted to understand their aspirations, frustrations, emotions, goals, satisfactions, and sufferings.

Interestingly, in the Indian context, studies focusing exclusively on teachers are relatively rare. Except for a few school ethnographies, the mention of teachers in educational research in India is usually limited to passing remarks or statistical data. In contrast, there are numerous studies conducted in many countries that focus on the lives of teachers, their emotions, beliefs, well-being, effectiveness, and professional development. Concerns of early career teachers have also become an increasingly prominent subject of research. The lack of representation of teachers in academic research in the Indian context motivated this study. Literature related to contract teachers is extensive, but the discussion tends to focus primarily on one question: whether contract teachers perform better than regular teachers or whether the hiring of contract teachers is cost-effective. I turned the focus on teachers themselves and asked how contractual employment affects teachers as persons and professionals. My purpose was to examine whether and how job insecurity and poor pay affect the concerns and priorities of early career teachers in Odisha.

The research reported in this thesis employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The findings have been interpreted in light of Margaret Archer's (2000, 2003, 2007) theorisation of how human beings with distinct concerns interact with structural powers and find ways to survive and thrive in society. This study contributes to the literature on the lives and identities of teachers. Specifically, it may be a valuable contribution to the discussion on the employment of contract teachers.

As an introduction to the thesis, this chapter explains why it is both important and interesting to conduct research on early career teachers in India. To provide a background to the study, it begins with a discussion of the emergence of research on teacher lives, phases in teachers' careers, and defining the notion of early career teachers. A concise discussion of the major elements of Indian education is also provided. An exploration of the position of government school teachers in contemporary India and the policy of hiring contract teachers in Odisha follows. Finally, the chapter presents the research questions and research design of the study as well as an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.1 Teachers' lives: An area of research

Since the 1980s, it became widely recognised that the social sciences, which had long been predominated by positivism and debates concerning structure and agency, had become detached from the lived experience of people (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). In response to that, biographical research began to gain wide acceptance as a method of scholarly investigation in various disciplines, a development usually referred to as the "biographical turn." (Chamberlayne et al., 2000; Harrison, 2008). However, research on people's lives and lived experience has a long history. Published in 1918-1921, Thomas and Znaniecki's study of Polish migrants in the United States, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, is considered one of the earliest and most influential works of biographical research (Merrill & West, 2009).

Thomas and Znaniecki's work was instrumental to the emergence of the Chicago School of Sociology in 1920, which conducted intensive fieldwork with immigrants, delinquents, and people experiencing poverty and used biographical methods.

Nevertheless, by the 1960s, the appeal of biographical methods had declined outside of the Chicago school as positivist and quantitative approaches to research had taken hold within sociology. In 1959, C. Wright Mills sought to revive humanistic values in sociology through his seminal work *The Sociological Imagination*. His central argument was that biography was the meeting point of social structures, history, and individual agency. Mills famously stated:

> The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. ... Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. ... The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. ... No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey. (Mills, 2000, pp. 3–6)

Despite Mill's exhortations to place people's lives at the forefront of sociological research, there were only sporadic attempts. However, several developments eventually shifted researchers' attention towards individual lives, such as the growing importance of oral history within history, the second wave of feminism, and the political struggle against racism, discrimination, oppression, and imperialism (Harrison, 2008). Biographical research was also revitalised by the publication of Daniel Bertaux's edited volume *Biography and Society* (1981), Ken Plummer's *Documents of Life (1983)* and Norman Denzin's *Interpretive Biography* (1989). Among educational researchers, Ivor F. Goodson advocated the use of the life history method to study the lives of teachers (Goodson, 1981, 1991; Ball & Goodson, 1985).

Guided by behavioural and cognitive psychology, much of the research on teachers until the 1980s focused on teacher behaviour, practice and cognitive processes. Goodson (1981) pointed out that education research generally treated teachers as timeless and interchangeable units in

school systems. The impetus for conducting research on teachers' lives stemmed from the realisation that what teachers did in their classrooms was linked with who they were as persons. In his classic book *Sociology of Teaching*, Waller (1932) reported that there was little separation between teachers' personal and professional lives, and hence, teachers were always on the stage performing their socially expected roles. As values and norms of society and the teaching profession changed over time, it became clear that teachers' professional roles did not entirely define their personal lives. In fact, many aspects of teachers' personal lives were identified as having an impact on their professional lives,

For example, Pajak and Blasé’s (1989) study on how teachers' personal and professional lives were intertwined revealed a number of interesting observations. Teachers reported that their work lives were influenced by many aspects of their personal lives, including their parental status, marriage, single status, personal interests, spiritual beliefs, extended families and friends, financial circumstances, health conditions, social status and social visibility (Pajak & Blase, 1989). A key point to note here is that the dimensions mentioned above were found to have both positive and negative implications for the professional lives of teachers. For example, while some teachers reported that becoming a parent enhanced their ability to care, be insightful, and work with competency, other teachers felt frustrated, tired, and guilty as a result of trying to balance both roles (Pajak & Blase, 1989). Similarly, some teachers viewed marriage as a source of stability, support, and security. However, marital problems were perceived as disruptive. Teachers experiencing marital conflict reported negative changes in their relationships with students, colleagues, and parents (Pajak & Blase, 1989).

The evolving understanding of teachers and teaching also required a re-evaluation of teacher development practices. It was evident that improving teaching involved more than simply training teachers in pedagogical tricks and techniques. In the words of Hargreaves (1994):

> It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get. ... We are beginning to recognize that, for teachers, what goes on inside the classroom is closely related to what goes on outside it. The quality, range and flexibility of teachers' classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth — with the way that they develop as people and as professionals. Teachers teach in the way they do not just because of the skills they have or have not learned. The ways they teach are also grounded in their backgrounds, their biographies, in the kinds of teachers they have become. Their careers— their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustration of these things - are also important for teachers' commitment, enthusiasm and morale. So too are relationships with their colleagues - either as supportive communities who work together in pursuit of common goals and continuous improvement, or as individuals working in isolation, with the insecurities that sometimes brings. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. ix)

Goodson (1997) provides several justifications for a research agenda focused on teachers' lives and work. First, it is critical to 'sponsor teachers' voices' since the majority of educational research fails to include their perspectives ([vor F. Goodson, 1997, p. 141). The general tendency is to relegate teachers to statistics and footnotes and view them as interchangeable and unproblematic. Teacher voice and knowledge can serve as a counter-cultural force by opposing the power and knowledge held, produced and propagated by politicians and administrators who control school systems.

Secondly, studying teachers' lives can enable researchers to evaluate education reforms from teachers' perspectives. By doing so, reforms that work against the history and context of teachers' lives can be exposed. The third reason for studying teachers' lives is to understand the process of teacher socialisation. Preservice teacher training and in-service training are usually regarded as the most significant socialising influences on early career teachers. However, as Lortie (1975) pointed out, teachers go through an 'apprenticeship of observation' during their childhood when they observe their teachers and internalise their teaching methods. In light of this, it is necessary to observe a teacher's pattern of socialisation over the course of his or her life. Finally, taking a clue from feminist research, Goodson suggests that studying the lives of

female teachers itself constitutes a reason for general life history work in education research. This is because women's lives and views are further marginalised and excluded within academic and policy discourses.

In the past four decades, numerous biographical studies have been conducted on various aspects of teachers' lives and work, particularly in the US and Western Europe. Notable studies include Ball and Goodson's (1985) edited volume on teachers' lives and careers in the UK and the USA; Evan's (1988) edited volume on physical education teachers; Nias's (1989) study of primary teachers in the UK; Bullough, Knowles and Crow's (1991) investigation into teacher socialisation; Casey's (1993) analysis of the life histories of women teachers concerned with social change in the USA; Kelchtermans's (1993, 2011, 2018) studies on teachers' self-understanding, vulnerability and professional development; Sike's (1997) study on the relationship between teaching and parenthood in the UK; and Connelly and Clandinin's (1997) narrative inquiry into teachers' personal practical knowledge; the Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and their Effects on Pupils (VITAE) research project conducted in the UK (Day et al., 2007); and, Day and Lee's (2011) edited volume on the role of teacher emotions in educational change, teaching, teacher education and leadership. In the Indian context, a research agenda focusing on teachers is yet to emerge. This thesis seeks to further this research agenda by focusing exclusively on the lives and concerns of early career teachers.

1.2 Early Career Teachers

Teachers' career paths can be divided into several phases since their working lives generally unfold in relatively predictable patterns. However, since careers do not always unfold in a linear manner empirically, these phases can be seen as Max Weber's ideal types. A career trajectory may include rapid advancements, stagnation, setbacks, gaps, and dead ends. As can be seen in Table 1.1 (from Huberman et al., 1997, p. 59), teachers' careers can be categorised

into several phases in multiple ways. Based on this table, it is evident that differing opinions exist with respect to the length of time during which a teacher may be considered an early career teacher. In this thesis, early career teachers are teachers who have not yet completed their sixth year as government school teachers. This is because elementary school teachers in Odisha are recruited on contract and treated more or less like probationary teachers for the first six years following their recruitment. It takes six years for them to become regular teachers and qualify for higher salaries and other benefits. This thesis draws upon studies concerning the first five to six years of a teacher's career, regardless of whether the authors specify that their respondents are early career teachers.

Table 1.1

Different conceptions of phases in teachers' careers

Phase/ stage	Unruh & Turner (1970)	Gregorc (1973)	Burden (1982)	Feimen & Floden (1983)	Huberman et al. (1989) Huberman (1989)	Fessler & Christensen (1992)
1	Initial teaching period (1-6 years)	Becoming	Survival (1st year)	Survival	Career entry and socialisation	Preservice
2	Building security (6-15 years)	Growing	Adjustment (2-4 years)	Consolidation	Diversification and change	Induction
3	Maturing period (15+ years)	Maturing	Mature (5+ years)	Renewal	Stock-taking and interrogations	Competency building
4		Fully functioning		Maturity	Serenity	Enthusiastic and growing
5		Professional			Conservatism	Career frustration
6					Disengagement	Career stability
7						Career wind-down and exit

(Huberman et al., 1997, p. 59)

Huberman et al. (1997) characterise the first two to three years of employment as a period of "survival" and "discovery" (pp. 42–43). Survival denotes dealing with "reality shock", initial complexities, uncertainties and difficulties. During this phase, teachers come to realise that school life does not correspond to their expectations. Simultaneously. teachers face the challenges in teaching and maintaining classroom discipline. This, in turn, leads them to question whether or not they are capable of handling the situation and adopt a trial-and-error approach. The discovery aspect of this phase indicates the enthusiasm of the beginner. Teachers feel excited about the prospect of teaching their own classes and being a part of a professional community. It is common for a teacher to experience both survival and discovery simultaneously, and the latter serves as a counterbalance to the former. However, when one of these two aspects dominates, a teacher will likely experience indifference or frustration.

The next phase of a teacher's career path can be described as a phase of *stabilisation* (Huberman et al., 1997, pp. 43-44). Typically, it lasts between the third and sixth year of employment. During this phase, the teacher commits herself to the teaching profession and eliminates the possibility of pursuing other career options. Others perceive the teacher as 'engaged'. Most teachers begin to feel competent, effective, and comfortable in their roles during this stage,. In addition, teachers engage in self-defined initiatives and become more assertive towards experienced colleagues and education administrators. A natural sense of authority develops.

Based on fluctuations in teachers' sense of efficacy and commitment over the course of their careers, Day et al. (2007) divide teachers' career paths into six phases. The first two phases cover the period from 0-3 to 4-7 years of employment. In the 0-3 phase, teachers' sense of efficacy and commitment can be influenced by several factors. Those who become teachers at a later age may already possess a high sense of efficacy due to their experience. Teachers whose beginning years are relatively painful may have a reduced sense of efficacy. The 4-7 phase is about whether a teacher's sense of efficacy and commitment sustains or deteriorates. Many

teachers believe their effectiveness is diminishing because of heavy workloads, while others may feel a strong sense of identity due to promotions, increased responsibilities, and recognition. Biographical factors (education, experience, background etc.) play an important role in the first phase, whereas professional factors (recognition, promotion, etc.) are more influential in the second phase.

Some beginning teachers are older and more experienced. More and more people are entering teacher education programs or joining the profession late in their careers. It is reasonable to expect mature adults to maintain stability, have realistic expectations, and have few disappointments (Brock & Grady, 2007). However, even mature beginners struggle with the same classroom dilemmas as younger beginning teachers. Planning daily lessons, motivating and managing students, and communicating with parents, colleagues, and administrators are all new experiences. Additionally, problems related to transportation, child care, sick children, and family obligations may be overwhelming for the teacher (Brock & Grady, 2007). As long as personal issues are not addressed, the teacher will have difficulty adjusting to the classroom's demands.

The first few years of a teaching career are crucial for teachers in terms of socialising into the profession (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010). Given the importance of this phase in teachers' careers, many studies have been conducted that exclusively focus on the experiences of early career teachers. Some of these studies will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The following sections provide a brief overview of the education system in India, which will help to position and justify the current thesis.

1.3 An overview of the Indian education system

> Any attempt to portray the contemporary situation of teachers' work and teachers' careers must inevitably begin by recognising the changing context within which this work is undertaken and careers constructed. (Ball & Goodson, 1985, p. 2)

This section aims to highlight the major elements of the Indian educational landscape. A brief discussion of the historical roots of Indian education will assist in understanding why things are the way they are.

India had a long tradition of education prior to the arrival of the British. "The British did not enter an educational tabula rasa" (Tschurenev, 2019, p. 38). There were many *gurukuls*, temple schools, and Buddhist monasteries in ancient India, as well as *tols*, *makhtabs*, *madrasas*, and *pathshalas* in medieval India (Diwan, 2015). Several scholars contend that the British introduced the modern school system and English education to meet their strategic objectives. In Macaulay's words, English education was needed "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1835 as cited in Evans, 2002, p. 271). Kumar (2006) argues that colonial education was designed as an 'ideological apparatus' to legitimise the privileges and dominance of the British. However, several studies also discuss the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists to argue that the introduction of modern English education in India can be seen as not just a colonial imposition but also as a consequence of indigenous demand (Acharya, 1988; Evans, 2002; Frykenberg, 1988; Seth, 2007).

Moreover, it would be incorrect to assume that a well-developed system of education had already existed in England and had simply been exported to the colonies. The education systems of England and India evolved simultaneously (Tschurenev, 2019). It was in colonies like India that modern social techniques were tested and educational experiments were

conducted. The replacement of indigenous education with colonial education was a slow and uneven process. However, the impact of colonial education was not only disruptive but also long-lasting. In the words of Tschurenev (2019):

> Colonial schooling not only changed the technology of instruction with new 'buildings, spaces, furniture, textbooks, languages, teachings methods, routines and rituals', but also introduced new 'relationships between student, teacher, text, and the world', embedded in a new politics of centralised control. This indeed caused a widening gap between the life-world experiences of students and the knowledge considered valid and 'useful' for being imparted at school – a problem that has been highlighted as a core feature of colonial education and haunts India's school system even today. (p. 2)

With the metamorphosis of the Indian educational system, English became a valuable, attractive, and respected language among Indians. The introduction of English led to the division of the Indian population into two groups: those who received English education and those who did not (Mehrotra, 2006). Indian society was already divided along caste lines; English education accentuated these differences and favoured those who were already privileged.

From British rule, India inherited a "top heavy-bottom weak, elite, literary, unproductive and irrelevant educational system" (Tilak, 2018, p. 42). Education expansion has been slow and market/demand-driven in most developed countries. However, the expansion of education in India was state-sponsored and rapid (Sharma, 2000). Compared to other third-world countries, the expansion of education in India was so impressive that it was described as an "educational miracle" (Tilak, 2018, p. 36). In reality, the expansion was primarily quantitative without much change in content, techniques, and values. In contrast to the police, revenue administration systems and the military, the creation of a solid and functional educational system was not considered essential for the continuation and viability of the state (Sharma, 2000). The colonial 'inspectorial' system was retained. Inspectors had questionable qualifications for the position (Sharma, 2000). Many states promoted high school teachers as inspectors, and in a few states,

generalists selected through a public examination were employed as inspectors with little or no professional training. In independent India, the failures of public education soon became evident. As JP Naik, an eminent educator, wrote in 1978:

> It would … be incorrect to describe the existing educational system as an instrument for educating the people … it is more appropriately designed for not educating them. In fact, the primary objective of the system is not to spread education among the people, but to function as an efficient and merciless mechanism to select individuals, who should continue to remain in the privileged sector or enter it afresh … The main achievement of the system is to condemn the bulk of the children of the common people to be drop-outs and failures and to confine them to a life of drudgery and poverty which has hardly any parallel in the contemporary world or even in our own history. (Naik, 1978 as cited in Tilak, 2018, p. 47)

During the 1990s, alternative and innovative education programs mushroomed (Kumar, 2006), and studies on elementary education proliferated rapidly (Mehrotra, 2006). Several international development agencies pointed out that economic planning and economic growth alone were insufficient to facilitate the development of the Third World. The importance of education was widely recognised both as a means to development as well as an indicator of development (Klees, 2008). The concept of human development had made its way into the global development discourse, and education was one of the dimensions of human development (Hopkins, 1991). This decade marked the beginning of India's economic liberalisation efforts. Under the pressure of Structural Adjustment Policies, government expenditures on the social sector declined while foreign aid began to flow into the country (Colclough & De, 2010). Consequently, foreign loans and aid dominated policymaking in elementary education. Education was reduced to promoting literacy (Kumar, 2006). The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), sponsored by the World Bank, claimed that undertrained para-teachers could 'educate' children in multi-grade classrooms with limited resources. It was evident that a reluctant state desperately sought to fulfil in some way its responsibility towards children.

In the Constitution of independent India, the provision of free and compulsory education to all children until age 14 had found a place in the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs), the non-justiciable obligations of the state. The goal was to be achieved within ten years of the adoption of the constitution, i.e., by 1960. However, it took almost half a century for free and compulsory education to become a legal obligation. In 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) was passed. The Act was undoubtedly a landmark achievement, but one that had been considerably delayed and truncated (Kumar, 2012; Iyer & Counihan, 2018). This policy had been repeatedly rejected and postponed due in part to a lack of funds. Another reason frequently cited in the literature on this topic is a lack of demand for education. Politicians and policymakers in India have often assumed that the poor do not value or demand education (Srivastava & Noronha, 2014). Even when they have access to education, they do not send their children to school regularly. This view has been criticised by highlighting inhibiting institutional structures that make schooling an unexciting, futile, hopeless, and sometimes embarrassing venture for children belonging to disadvantaged families.

Several criticisms have been levelled against the RTE Act of 2009. A major criticism relates to the clause requiring 25% of seats in private schools to be allocated to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and weaker sections. This provision can be interpreted as the state acknowledging its inability to provide quality education and the superiority of private schools over public schools (Mehendale et al., 2015). Additionally, it legitimises the private sector explicitly and institutionally and moves away from the vision of a common school system (Kumar, 2012). The Act does not contain any provisions for free preschool education. In contrast to the DPSP, which proposed free education for all children until the age of 14, the RTE Act promises free education for children between the ages of 6 and 14 (Sadgopal, 2010). There has been criticism that the Act misplaces priorities by concentrating solely on input

requirements when many studies report that input-based measures do not always improve learning outcomes (Iyer & Counihan, 2018).

In spite of its flaws and deficiencies, the RTE Act introduced some fundamental changes to school education. It stipulated the right of every child to access a formal school with a minimum number of teachers and infrastructure requirements. School access was further streamlined by extending the age of admission, relaxing documentary requirements, and eliminating admission tests. The Act prescribed the adoption of child-centred pedagogy in schools and emphasised the prohibition of expulsion, a no-detention policy, and continuous comprehensive evaluation. Additionally, the Act encouraged joyful learning by prohibiting discrimination, physical punishment, and psychological harassment in schools. There is a wide variation in the degree to which these changes are actually reflected at the grassroots level. A number of studies evaluating the implementation of the Act have been published in academic journals and popular press (for example, see Rai, 2014; Nawani, 2017; Sisodiya & Prakash, 2019; Krishna et al., 2020). Whether the provision of 25% seats in private schools for economically disadvantaged children can mitigate educational disparities remains a matter of research (Mehendale et al., 2015; Sucharita & Sujatha, 2019). The current thesis argues that the success of this Act depends in large part on whether the underlying values and action plans reflect the everyday realities and priorities of teachers. "No educational reform has achieved success without teachers committing themselves to it" (Day et al., 2007, p. 20). It is, therefore, pertinent to examine whether teachers in India are committed both to the letter and the spirit of the RTE Act and what facilitates or inhibits their commitment.

Schools in India are primarily divided into two types: government-run schools and private schools. Some private schools are recognized by the government and are aided. Some are recognised only and some are still unrecognised. In many ways, aided private schools are similar to government schools since no tuition fees are charged to students up to grade eight,

and teachers who teach in these schools are employed and paid by the government. Recognised private schools include all elite private schools and many smaller private schools. Unrecognised schools are usually low-cost private schools. These schools remain invisible in most official statistics. Some state governments closed down these schools after the RTE Act was enacted since most of them did not meet the infrastructure requirements stipulated in the Act (Iyer & Counihan, 2018).

Before the 1990s, private English-medium schools were confined to urban areas and cities and could only be accessed by urban upper- and middle-class families. In 2001, Tilak and Sudarshan reported that private schools accounted for 9% of the total enrolments at primary level and 11% at the upper primary level. According to them, the size of the private sector was very small and would remain small because the expansion of the private sector would result in a decrease in the average quality of education, which would be counterproductive (Tilak & Sudarshan, 2001). According to Goyal and Pandey (2012), 25% of total students were enrolled in private schools in 2006. Kingdon (2017) calculated that this figure was 29.6% in 2014-15. Furthermore, she found that the number of government schools with fewer than 50 students had increased since 2005. As per the UDISE+ website of the Ministry of Education, 22.6% of total schools in India are private schools in 2021-22, and 33.3% of total students are enrolled in private schools (UDISE+, 2022).

It is difficult to determine the exact number and growth rate of private schools since a large proportion is constituted by unrecognized rural primary schools and undercounted in official statistics. Nevertheless, private schools have become common in most Indian towns and villages. Critiques of private schools have referred to this expansion as the “mushrooming of teaching shops” (G. G. Kingdon, 2017). While some have argued that low-cost private schools are effective and desirable alternatives to government schools (Jain & Dholakia, 2009), others disagree (Rana et al., 2005; Sarangapani, 2009). Most private schools are English-medium,

which is one of the reasons for their appeal. According to Anitha (2005), the proliferation of English-medium schools across the country reflects the education system's efforts to perpetuate the existing social structure by maintaining a competitive advantage for its traditional clientele while simultaneously providing low-quality government schools for the children of the illiterate masses.

There is considerable variation in the performance of private schools (Chudgar, 2012). Although private schools outperform government schools in some studies, the overall quality of education is low in both kinds of schools (Goyal & Pandey, 2012). However, private schools offer a better quality of education at a much lower cost than government schools since the salaries of teachers are kept to a minimum (G. G. Kingdon, 2017).

In government schools, not all students receive an equal education. Government schools across the country vary enormously in terms of school infrastructure, teacher allocation, and teachers' working conditions. The Government of Odisha, for example, runs thousands of resource-poor small schools with just two teachers, one classroom, and less than sixty students. In each block of the state, the same government runs an English medium Model school which provides facilities similar to those found in decent private schools. Depending on the size, location, and resources available, government schools function differently. Unlike private schools and large government schools where the school day is divided into periods for different subjects, single- and two-teacher primary schools do not adhere strictly to a timetable. The length of a learning episode in such schools can range from less than ten minutes to nearly the entire school day (Anitha, 2005). Most parents who can afford private education hesitate to enrol their children in a government school. Government schools are "the recourse for only the extremely marginalised sections of the population. . . *schools of the last resort*" (Mukhopadhyay & Sarangapani, 2018, p. 12 emphasis original). Many of the communities accessing government schools do not have a history of interacting with the institution and do not have the power to

ensure its accountability. Researchers have warned that the existence of a dual-track education system in which the privileged have easy access to private schools and historically excluded castes and classes are only able to access the lowest quality education opportunities can worsen socioeconomic disparities (Hill et al., 2011; Chudgar & Creed, 2016).

In addition to formal schools, tutoring and coaching facilities are also widespread in the Indian educational landscape. The prevalence of this phenomenon, however, is not well documented or studied. Private tuition can be defined as "extra coaching in academic and examinable subjects that is given to students outside school hours for remuneration" (Foondun, 2002, p. 487). According to Bray (1999), private tuition exists as a 'shadow' of formal education- just as expansive as the mainstream yet without the public's attention. Amartya Sen accurately portrays the situation of private tuition in India:

> [There is a] general conviction among the parents that private tuition is "unavoidable" if it can be at all afforded. ... India is one of the very few countries in the world in which private tuition is thought to be necessary even at the earliest stages of primary education. Reliance on private tuition for very young children is unknown not only in Europe and America, but also in many developing countries as well. (Sen, 2009, p. 13)

Parents and students seek private tuition for various reasons, such as aspirations for admission to prestigious schools and colleges, ineffective teaching and large class sizes in schools and peer pressure (Foondun, 2002). Ironically, students in India who complain about class sizes and the quality of teaching in their schools often opt for tutoring in classes of similar sizes taught by tutors with doubtful qualifications (Bhorkar & Bray, 2018). Private tutoring plays a greater role than mainstream education, particularly at the higher secondary level. At the primary level, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) of 2013 claims private tuition compensates for disadvantages caused by household circumstances. "Children who live in *katcha* homes and get tuition have very similar learning outcomes to those who live in pucca homes and do not take private tuition" (Wadhwa, 2013, p. 11).

Most students and their parents consider schooling to be a lengthy process of preparation for the job market. In her ethnographic study, Sarangapani (2003) found that "school learning, rather than being perceived as enabling one *to do a job*, was perceived as enabling one *to get a job*" (p. 61, emphasis original). Furthermore, she reported that both students and parents were of the opinion that private schools were better than government schools. Several factors contributed to this perception, including the fact that private schools were English medium schools. Moreover, private schools were thought to adhere more strictly to proper values and norms. Students were expected to wear the appropriate uniform and arrive on time. In private schools, students are assigned extensive work and punished for noncompliance (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 65).

The level of parental interest and investment in their children's education is influenced by a number of factors, including parental education, social and economic background, employment opportunities, regional development, local customs, school quality, costs, and government subsidies (Maertens, 2011). For example, patrilocality- the custom of the bride moving in with her husband and his parents- may discourage parents from investing in their daughters' education. Alternatively, some parents may believe that educated daughters will be more attractive to potential suitors for marriage. In addition, if their daughter earns a living, they may have to give fewer dowries. Several parents in Maertens's (2011) study were unable to predict the future earnings of their children. The extent to which parents are aware of the benefits of education depends on the amount of information they receive through the media and schools, the number of educated individuals they know, and their own level of education. Parents' expectations regarding their children's return to education differ by region, gender, and caste. Families of unemployed educated youth feel doubly disappointed: while education does not guarantee employment, it can lead to undesirable behaviours among young people. Parents complain that educated youth disassociate themselves from, and in some cases disrespect, local

traditions, refuse to be involved in household and agricultural work, act like 'VIPs', and are always in need of money (Morarji, 2014).

1.4 Being a government schoolteacher in contemporary India

It may be argued that teaching in a government school today has become both challenging and more accessible in some ways. Formerly, candidates with teacher training certificates had to wait years for the announcement of vacancies in government schools. Currently, states are recruiting teachers more frequently than ever to achieve the student-teacher ratio as recommended in the RTE Act. Teachers, however, are under unprecedented pressure to perform a wide variety of tasks. With successive pay commissions, the salaries of different categories of government teachers have increased. However, the profession has experienced a decline in its status. Over the past two decades, the teaching workforce has also grown significantly. Yet, the professional authority of teachers seems to be eroding over time. Being at the bottom of the educational hierarchy, they have little influence over policies and regulations that significantly impact their lives. While teachers are still regarded as gurus in popular discourse, they are also blamed for poor academic performance in government schools. Teachers in many states, such as Odisha where empirical research for this study was conducted, are required to undergo lengthy periods of contractual employment during which they receive meager salaries. Thus, government school teachers find themselves in a paradoxical position.

However, one cannot simply do away with teachers, notwithstanding the current fascination of political-administrative leaders and non-governmental organisations with digital technology-assisted learning. Day et al. (2007) convincingly advocate the indispensability of teachers by stating:

> Teachers matter. They matter to the education and achievement of their students and, more and more, to their personal and social well-being. No educational reform has achieved success without teachers committing themselves to it; no school has improved without the commitment

> of teachers; and although some students learn despite their teachers, most learn because of them – not just because of what and how they teach, but, because of who they are as people. (Day et al., 2007, p. 20)

For more than a decade, the Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) have been reiterating the finding that a large portion of students in government schools lack grade-specific learning. To improve the quality of government schools, state governments have increased the allocation of funds for development of school infrastructure and teacher recruitment. The government schools, however, remain ineffective in popular perception, and the teachers working in these schools are often criticised for the deteriorating condition of their schools. This perception is reflected in admission preferences, media reports, academic literature, and, most crucially, in the governments' teacher management policies and practices. The purpose of this section is to describe how the discourse about government school teachers has changed in recent years.

1.4.1 *From object of worship to object of ridicule*

The teacher of ancient and medieval India had authority, status, and privilege. Renowned teachers adorned royal courts as scholars and advisors. For much of India's history, teachers were venerated as gurus and "objects of worship" (Kumar, 2005, p. 90). In the villages, teachers relied on donations from parents but were respected and loved by all. There was little change in the situation until the 19th century.

> The Indian Education (Hunter) Commission noted that "the schoolmaster of an old fashioned indigenous school is much respected"; and even the "shouting and confusion" in class which the commission saw as characteristic of indigenous schools, "form part of the peculiar charm which parents appreciate in the indigenous system." The institution of the indigenous 'schoolteacher' was, many observers attested, one which ordinary folk were reluctant to regard as superseded. (Seth, 2007, p. 39)

Teaching, however, was not a means of employment available to all. Kumar (2005) argues that the colonial administration was instrumental in turning teachers into "meek dictators". By

keeping the salary and status of teachers as low as possible, the job attracted "only the neediest, and among them the most helpless" (Kumar, 2005, p. 79).

> On the eve of Independence, at the lower level of the educational ladder teachers were being paid rates at or below those earned by people in menial professions, and most continued to be ill qualified and ill trained (or untrained) for teaching. (Seth, 2007, p. 25)

Despite several crucial reforms over the following decades in teacher recruitment and management policies, the status of teachers in government-run schools has not improved much. Additionally, criticism of teachers is now more prevalent in educational discourse than earlier. A news report puts it thus:

> Government schools in India have for long been weighed down by a perception problem: the education they impart is suspected to be low on quality, making for poor learning outcomes, their physical infrastructure too deficient to allow them to focus beyond textbooks, and they are thought to have too few, well-trained teachers. (Pandey, 2018)

The widespread erosion of trust in most of the public institutions could largely be responsible for the negative portrayal of government schools and teachers working in these schools. Nevertheless, is it merely a "perception problem?" Several studies on teachers in India have found evidence for holding teachers partly responsible for the current crisis in school education. Studies highlight teacher absenteeism (Kremer et al., 2005), teachers' inadequate and poor training (Desai, 2012; Goel & Goel, 2012), teachers' lack of accountability (PROBE, 1999), involvement in local politics (Kingdon & Muzammil, 2009), and their petty corruptions such as offering private tuition classes (Biswal, 1999) or paying bribes for transfer (Béteille, 2015). The issues raised in academic literature are potentially responsible for corroding the reputation of the teaching community. The World Bank report titled *Student Learning in South Asia* (Dundar et al., 2014) notes that "substandard teaching" is the foremost factor of low-quality education in developing countries (p. 197). Apart from reiterating high rates of teacher absenteeism, low teacher effort and general lack of accountability, the report also discusses shreds of evidence of teachers' lack of knowledge:

> While there is anecdotal evidence that many teachers in South Asia barely know more than their students, only recently have data been generated to quantify the extent of the problem. … The best-scoring of the regular teachers scored only 55 percent in Bihar and 51 percent in Uttar Pradesh on a test based on the primary math curriculum they are supposed to teach. (Dundar et al., 2014, p. 201-202)

Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani (2018) argue that a new discursive regime of educational ideas has emerged in India. Concepts such as quality, efficiency, and accountability are now employed with very specific meanings, and the discourse using these concepts endorses a particular set of policy solutions. Quality, for instance, is now measured only on the basis of students' learning outcomes. Efficiency implies value for money, and accountability means "control" and "management" of teachers' work. Jain and Saxena (2010) observe that research inspired by neoliberal thinking portrays teachers as expensive, inefficient, "unjustifiably privileged middle-class professionals", "an easily available human resource, a replaceable cog" and advocates expansion of low-cost schooling with low teacher salaries (pp. 79–80).

In local media, it is not uncommon to encounter reports about teachers accused of misconduct, abusing students, misappropriating school funds, not showing up in schools, negligence in duty, and doing personal work during school hours, etc. Some of the recent headlines are: *Fake school teacher terminated after 16 years of service* (Times of India, 2022), *Tamil Nadu teacher arrested for marrying minor student* (Nath, 2022), *Government school teacher owns 20 colleges, assets 1000 times more than his income* (Financial Express, 2022). Journalists have also televised classroom scenes where the teacher was teaching something incorrectly, or the teacher was in an inebriated condition. No other profession seems to have received as much negative publicity as teaching. Although rarely, one also encounters opinions and stories sympathetic to the teachers. A recent article titled *Teachers must not be blamed for India's poor learning outcomes* (Behar, 2022) exemplifies the emergence of new voices that challenge the dominant narrative.

The discourse of teacher criticism can also be recognised in teachers' writings. A particularly revealing example is an article published in an Odia local daily, titled A*ajna, Mun Jane sarakari sikhyaka* (Sir, I am a government school teacher) (Mohanty, 2019). Authored by a government school teacher, this article offers an unpretentious description of the social image of teachers in contemporary India. A few excerpts are worth quoting:

> Yes, I am a teacher in a government primary school. I have BA and B.Ed. degrees. Joy, peace and respect have vanished from my life- in school and out of school. Everywhere I am compared with private school teachers and criticised. Some people say that children of government schools cannot even write their parents' names. Some say these children come to school only for the mid-day meal. Others comment about a certain male teacher who comes to school after getting drunk and the lady teacher who is usually seen sleeping on a chair during school hours. Surveys like ASER and NAS (National Achievement Survey) question our competency. It is not just the laypeople who make fun of the quality of education in government schools; officers of the education department also scoff at our schools. With whom shall I share my sorrow?
>
> Although I am a teacher, I am responsible for everything besides education. … Everything is smart these days- smart classes and smart children. But they do not say that I am smart. According to the government's rules, punishment is banned in schools. However, our children are really smart. They threaten me with false allegations and say, they will approach the media and Commissions for human rights and child rights. If something wrong ever gets published in the media, the officers of the education department will destroy me. I will be labelled worthless or someone who cannot manage even basic things in a primary school.
>
> I do not get my salary on time. I have to rush to the office of the Block Education Officer frequently regarding matters like salary increments, GPF (General Provident Fund), updating my service book, etc. From the peon to the head clerk—everyone has to be bribed. I risk my file and service book being "lost" otherwise. Even the peon harasses me, threatening that he will get me transferred. He talks foul and calls me at odd hours. In the eyes of the clerks of the Block office, teachers are inferior creatures. Or in other words, we are like their prey.

The author indicates some of the effects of the discourse of teacher criticism. Teachers of government schools have become easy targets to be ridiculed, threatened, harassed, and insulted.

Negative public perception of teachers is arguably most noticed in parents' choices of schools for their wards. While school choice is influenced by an array of factors (such as availability of schools in the vicinity, medium of instruction, teaching-learning activities, fees and other expenses, school reputation, infrastructure, and safety), many parents consider teachers' characteristics an essential factor. Lahoti and Mukhopadhyay (2019) reported that even when parents value teacher characteristics, they do not necessarily choose schools with better teachers. Their data showed a greater number of qualified, trained, and experienced teachers working in government schools than in private schools. Why do some parents choose private schools when they value better teachers, and such teachers are usually employed in government schools? The authors argue that these parents are misinformed and misled by private schools. This argument seems valid given the skilful marketing strategies that the private schools engage in to lure parents. However, one could also argue that the mismatch in parental perception of teachers and actual teacher characteristics reflect the widespread mistrust in the effectiveness of government school teachers. In a similar study conducted in Andhra Pradesh (Morrow & Wilson, 2014), researchers found that many parents were dissatisfied with government schools for teacher-specific reasons.

> Parents complained about government school teachers not caring about children, being absent frequently, being distracted, not caring whether children attended school or not, not caring whether children were fed good food, and not communicating with parents. Some parents felt that the government schools were getting worse. Some other parents complained about very large class sizes in government schools, especially when teachers were absent. (Morrow & Wilson, 2014, p. 4)

Some teacher management policies can also be regarded as causes as well as effects of this discourse. The large-scale recruitment of para-teachers by several state governments in the last two decades is an exemplary case (Chandra, 2015; Kaushik et al., 2009). In the context of acute teacher shortage and financial constraints, recruiting local, untrained youth with just ten to twelve years of formal education as primary teachers by offering a fraction of the salaries of

regular teachers was argued as the most efficient and cost-effective policy solution. This policy reflects the underlying assumption that teaching in primary schools did not require specific skills and knowledge, and just about anyone could teach. Teachers were reduced to implementers of curricula designed at the top level. The RTE Act sought to reverse this trend by mandating that only trained teachers could be recruited. Qualifying the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) also became mandatory for becoming a teacher. The practice of recruiting contractual teachers has been done away with in some states. However, several states such as Meghalaya, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Assam continue to hire contract teachers. The following section discusses the hiring system for contract teachers in Odisha, the state in which fieldwork for this study was conducted.

1.5 Contract teacher hiring policy in Odisha

Around 2004, Odisha began hiring contract teachers, and this practice has evolved over time with changes in eligibility criteria, salary, and designations. Before the enactment of the RTE Act, untrained local youth could be recruited as contract teachers. Currently, candidates are only eligible to apply only if they possess the required education and training to be a teacher. Except for teachers in state-run model schools, all teachers in Odisha are recruited as contract teachers (Ramachandran et al., 2018). Contract teachers can become regular teachers after six years of service (School & Mass Education Department, 2019).

Before 2018, the contractual teachers were designated *as Sikhya Sahayaks* (teaching assistants) and colloquially referred to as “SS teachers.” However, the designation of *Sahayak* or assistant does not accurately reflect their actual role because their responsibilities were the same as those of regular teachers (Béteille & Ramachandran, 2016; Panda, 2018). The teachers of this cadre, frustrated with their meagre salaries and service conditions, frequently went on strikes and

demanded pay hikes, ease of transfer, and other benefits (Singha, 2015; The Samaya, 2017; Nayak, 2018). Changing the designation *Sikhya Sahayak* was also one of the demands.

In 2018, the government of Odisha abolished the designation of *Sikhya Sahayak* and introduced two new cadres- Junior Teacher-Contractual (JTC) and Junior Teacher (JT) (Odisha Diary, 2018; School & Mass Education Department, 2019). In order to become a regular teacher, one must first serve three years as a JTC and another three years as a JT (Figure 1.1). JTs neither have renewable contracts like JTCs nor do they receive the same benefits as regular teachers. The salary of a JT is slightly higher than that of a JTC, indicating that the promotion is not significant (Table 1.2). Most importantly, these six years are not included in the service record of a teacher. In view of the significant difference in employment terms between the first six years of service and subsequent years of service, we consider the first six years of service to be the teachers' contract period. Therefore, this study draws participants from both cadres.

Figure 1.1

Change in the designation of contract teachers

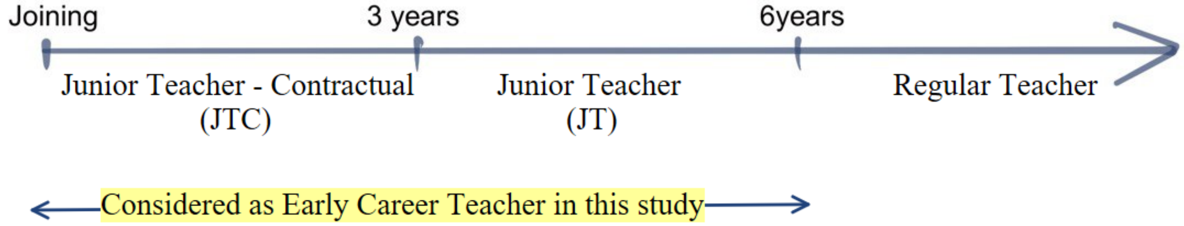


Table 1.2

Revisions in the salaries of contract teachers (in Rs. per month)

	Before 2013	2013 onwards	2016 onwards	2022 onwards
From joining to third year	4000	5200	7400	11000
Fourth to sixth year	4500	7000	9200	13800

(The Economic Times, 2013; The Times of India, 2016; India Today, 2022)

1.6 Research questions

By sponsoring teachers' voices and calibrating their lives and lived experiences, this study seeks to include teachers' narratives in academic and policy discourse. Specifically, it explores the everyday experiences of early career teachers, their life trajectories, beliefs and attitudes, values, goals, disappointments, struggles, and relationships. In order to guide this exploration, the following questions are posed:

- How and why do people decide to become contract teachers? Which factors bear importance in their decision to become teachers?
- Considering the fact that government schools are generally criticised as ineffective, and teachers are viewed as the root cause of this problem, how do teachers view their work and working conditions? In order to survive and thrive at work, what strategies do they employ?
- In what ways do their personal and professional lives intersect? How do they negotiate tensions between their personal and professional commitments? What are the implications of their strategies for their overall wellbeing?
- How is their work facilitated or hindered by structural and cultural factors? Do they consider themselves capable of overcoming obstacles and taking advantage of opportunities?

1.7 Research design

Qualitative research is especially suitable for studying people's beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. It allows for gathering data on people's reasons for action and their interpretations of the world around them. When addressing topics with little prior research, such as the topic

of this study - the lives of early career researchers in Odisha - the qualitative approach facilitates exploration and provides insights for future study. Therefore, the study employed a qualitative methodology and in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to collect data. Interviewing is the most effective method of capturing people's life experiences and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Forsey, 2012). FGDs facilitate interaction among participants who share some common characteristics. In addition to revealing common concerns, the interaction even raises questions that were not considered previously and encourages participants to participate in unexpected ways (Robinson, 2012).

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in the Keonjhar district of Odisha. Using maximum variation purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012), 20 contract teachers were selected for interview. To interview the teachers listed in the sample, permission was obtained from the District Education Officer (DEO) of Keonjhar. Prior to conducting the interviews, participants provided their oral/verbal consent. Among the 20 teachers approached, 17 agreed to participate in the study. The interview schedule included questions pertaining to participants' educational trajectories, career decision-making, experiences as teachers, and future plans, which resulted in rich biographical narrative data. Over the course of 2018 and 2019, each participant was interviewed three times and three FGDs were conducted. The interviews lasted about 50–90 minutes, resulting in 45 hours of interview data. The interviews were digitally recorded. All interviews were conducted in Odia, the vernacular language of Odisha. The interviews were later transcribed and translated into English for computer-assisted analysis.

The data were analysed following the thematic analysis method elaborated by Braun and Clarke (2006). In order to become familiar with the dataset, we read the transcripts several times and noted our initial thoughts. Data chunks were coded using descriptive codes (Saldana, 2013). These codes were then analysed and combined into themes and sub-themes. Margaret Archer's

(1995, 2000) theoretical work on how human beings acquire social identities provided the framework for theming the data. Thematic maps were developed to clarify the relationship between themes. Finally, the themes and sub-themes were evaluated to ensure they adequately represented the dataset.

Although the study is based on the narratives of 17 teachers, the ultimate goal is to show “how the particular encompasses and reveals the universal, how in the single case the complexity of more general processes and patterns is manifested” (Kelchtermans, 2008, p. 29).

1.8 Overview of chapters

This chapter introduced the academic, historical and policy context in which this study is situated. It discussed the emerging area of research on teacher's lives and early career teachers, key features of the Indian education system, what it means to be a teacher in the contemporary Indian society, as well as Odisha's contract teacher hiring policy. Additionally, it presented the questions that guided this study and briefly described its methodology and setting.

An extensive review of the relevant literature is presented in Chapter 2. It presents a thematic analysis of studies conducted on teachers from abroad as well as from India. Furthermore, it provides a detailed review of studies on early career teachers and contract teachers. Chapter 3 discusses the study's theoretical background. It introduces the basic tenets of critical realism and presents theoretical constructs of Margaret Archer that are relevant to this study. In light of the theoretical background, the study's research questions are reformulated. Chapter 4 presents the methodological concerns. It details the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach, the methods used to collect data, and the procedures involved in fieldwork. Additionally, it provides an overview of the district of Keonjhar, where the fieldwork was conducted.

Chapter 5,6,7 and 8 present an analysis of the interview data collected in this study. Chapter 5 focuses on why and how participants became contract teachers. Chapter 6 discusses their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with their jobs. Chapter 7 examines their efforts to align their concerns and thrive as contract teachers. Chapter 8 summarizes the macro aspects of their working environment which facilitate or hinder their performance. Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, provides a summary of the findings and their implications. It also identifies the limitations of this study and provides recommendations for future research and policymaking.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

Teaching as work may seem straightforward, but it requires considerable effort (Labaree, 2000). “Teachers’ lives are packed with complexity and surprise. Learning about teachers’ working lives is a continuous process of unending discovery.” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. xiii). Any serious observer can readily see that teaching is not merely the mechanical transmission of knowledge. To teach effectively, the whole person must be involved. There would be many constraints as well as opportunities for teachers, which also require the observer’s attention for a comprehensive understanding of the teaching process (Clark & Peterson, 1984). Typical aspects of the teacher’s work context that serve either as constraints or opportunities include: availability of time, students’ abilities, availability of teaching-learning materials (TLMs), curriculum requirements, class size, classroom conditions, and the diversity of students. Through their experiences with these “frame factors”, teachers develop specific modes of teaching, survival techniques and coping strategies (Jordell, 1987, p. 175). Jordell (1987) also argues that as a teacher ages, structural factors become increasingly influential while the values and beliefs they developed during their childhood and teacher training tend to erode. A teacher’s ultimate success lies in making herself unnecessary by empowering students to learn independently.

The world of teachers is filled with complexities, and a large body of literature exists to provide insight into many aspects of it. The focus of this thesis, however, is limited to early career teachers working as contract teachers in Odisha and their lived experiences. Due to the limited number of studies that exclusively focus on teachers in the Indian context, I collected and reviewed relevant studies using a hermeneutic framework, as proposed by Boell and Cecez-

Kecmanovic (2010). Unlike systematic reviews that follow a predetermined set of criteria for inclusion and exclusion before review, a hermeneutic review involves a thorough reading of a set of relevant texts to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and identify additional literature. Thus, literature search and reading becomes an ongoing and iterative process. Each text is interpreted in the context of the whole body of literature. A researcher may leave the hermeneutic circle when further literature review contributes only marginally to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Following the hermeneutic approach, a few international and Indian studies about teachers were first read thoroughly. In light of these texts, more studies were identified and examined. The corpus of relevant literature gradually expanded to include studies on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, identity, commitment, school ethnographies and reports containing findings about teachers. Only studies with substantial findings on teachers' lives are included in the review. The final selection of literature was analysed thematically.

The relevant insights of studies reviewed are presented in four sections. In the first section, a few key concepts emerging from global research on teachers are discussed. The second section focuses exclusively on studies reporting on early career teachers. The third section provides an overview of the knowledge we have about teachers in India and the final section is devoted to studies regarding contract teachers.

2.1 Studies on teachers' lives

In the decades following the publication of Willard Waller's (1932/1976) classic work titled *The sociology of teaching*, there has been an explosion of research on several aspects of teachers' personal and professional lives in North America, Europe, and Australia. The aim of this section is to provide an overview of research conducted on key areas concerning teachers' lives and work, as well as to illustrate the depth and diversity of this field of study. This section

is organised based on some of the key themes of research in this field- conceptualisation of teachers' work, their sense of self-efficacy, commitment, identity, vulnerability, de-professionalisation, deskilling, and demoralisation. The section concludes with a discussion of the key concerns identified in prominent studies on early career teachers.

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of teachers' work

One of the oldest and most enduring conceptualisations of teachers' work is that teaching is essentially a moral endeavour (Hansen, 2001). Any action taken by a teacher has the potential to convey moral meaning to students. Apparently trivial and routine things such as where a teacher stands while speaking to her students, how she speaks, and where she pays attention, all have moral significance. Nevertheless, much of the current educational research, policy, and practice emphasises teaching as a means to an end and disregards the fact that means can be consequential in and of themselves.

Another approach to conceptualising the teacher's work, which has become prevalent in policy discourses over the last century, is the bureaucratic view (Firestone & Bader, 1991). This view suggests that teaching involves a limited amount of uncertainty. Even though teachers face a variety of problems on a daily basis, this view holds that these problems are rather easy to analyse. Using scientific theory and research, a finite set of solutions can be offered to these problems. Consequently, this view recommends standardising curricula and texts, as well as implementing rules, differentiating roles, and administering tests.

Contrary to the bureaucratic view of teachers' work, the professional view emphasises the uncertainty of teaching (Firestone & Bader, 1991). It argues that to overcome endemic uncertainties, professional judgement, trial and error learning must complement a robust knowledge base. While making professional judgments, research-based knowledge needs to be taken into consideration, but context-specific considerations are equally important. According

to this view, supervision and standardisation should be reduced because they impede the use of judgment. Rather, policy must focus on better socialisation of teachers, their professional development, and leadership potential.

Finally, there are researchers who prefer to view teaching as a form of labour (Connell, 2009; Seddon & Palmieri, 2009). Teachers' work is similar to that of other workers in many ways. There are various kinds of employment contracts that teachers enter into, as well as a variety of relationships that they have with colleagues, clients, and managers. Organisational imperatives and culture affect their working lives. As with any industrial worker, teachers are affected by organisational dynamics such as power, authority, conflict, negotiation, etc.

Every study of teachers is guided by a particular conceptualisation of their work. The majority of the studies reviewed next adhere to the professional view. The present thesis, however, is inspired by both professional and labour perspective. As much as teachers and teacher educators aspire to act as professionals, the thesis asserts that teachers' lives are profoundly affected by employment contracts, organisational power dynamics, and conflicts.

2.1.2 Teachers' sense of self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy has its roots in psychology (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-moran et al., 1998). Many researchers have examined teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in a variety of educational contexts. Self-efficacy basically means perceived competency, "being convinced of one's own ability" (Vielufa et al., 2013, p. 92), "self-referent judgments of capability" (Zee & Koomen, 2016, p. 981). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy reject fatalism (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). They acknowledge that the intelligence of students, their home environment, and other factors influence their learning. However, they also recognise their ability as educators to influence students' learning positively despite contextual obstacles. A number of studies have demonstrated that teachers' feeling of self-efficacy is positively related

to their students' achievement, the quality of their classroom processes, and their own well-being (for a review of related literature see Zee & Koomen, 2016).

McLaughlin (1992), however, points out that the sense of efficacy of a teacher should not be viewed as a general characteristic. It is possible for efficacy beliefs to differ between classes of students taught by the same teacher. Furthermore, it is likely that teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs will become frustrated when they are not able to meet their performance goals (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Teachers may also develop a false sense of self-efficacy if they do not receive adequate feedback or support (Elliott et al., 2010). Some of the key questions in this area of research are which factors influence teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Ramey-Gassert et al., 1996; Stipek, 2012; Phan & Locke, 2015), what dimensions self-efficacy has (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), how self-efficacy relates to effort (Magno & Sembrano, 2007), and what strategies should be employed for promoting self-efficacy among early career teachers (Elliott et al., 2010).

2.1.3 Teacher commitment

Good teachers, according to Day et al. (2007), not only possess high levels of content knowledge and pedagogical skills, but also a strong commitment to their work, their students, and students' achievements. Teachers' commitment has received considerable attention since the 1980s because of its implications for teacher retention. Nevertheless, the term commitment remains somewhat ambiguous since it has been used to describe a number of characteristics, including quality, dedication, and professional conduct (Choi & Tang, 2011). While there is no precise definition of the concept of commitment, it is generally acknowledged as a vital attribute of teachers. It is also important to note that teachers can have multiple objects of commitment and that these objects may change over the course of their careers and life phases (Choi & Tang, 2011). Moreover, high levels of commitment are frequently associated with an increased interference with personal time (Choi & Tang, 2011).

Teachers' commitment or sense of responsibility for their students' learning can be influenced by their beliefs about their students' abilities. A study conducted in the United States reported that teachers in predominantly low-income and African American schools emphasised students' deficits and had a reduced sense of responsibility for student learning (Diamond et al., 2004). However, when a higher proportion of students belonged to middle-income, white, or Asian families, teachers viewed students as intelligent and felt more accountable for their learning.

Firestone and Pennell's (1993) review of literature on teacher commitment is particularly relevant for this thesis. The crux of their argument is that policies influence commitments by shaping teachers' working conditions. According to the studies included in their review workplace conditions that contribute to teacher commitment include: skill variety (opportunity to use a variety of skills for a range of activities), task identity (scope to do a complete job from beginning to end), task significance (meaningfulness of work), autonomy, participation in strategic decision making, feedback, collaboration, learning opportunities and resources (an orderly environment, administrative support, adequate physical conditions, instructional resources, and reasonable workloads). When all of these aspects of the workplace are in order, teaching becomes an intrinsically rewarding activity. In reality, however, these variables are often poorly configured, resulting in lower levels of teacher commitment. For example, when teachers are required to perform an endless variety of tasks, they experience role strain. On the other hand, reforms that seek to reduce the complexities and uncertainties of teaching by standardising and routinising teachers' work are also counterproductive because they result in deskilling (Apple, 1986).

Similarly, although teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy within their classrooms, they do not have adequate opportunities to participate in higher level decision making. Most teachers acknowledge that their interactions with their students are their primary source of information

regarding the effectiveness of their teaching. Administrative feedback is considered useless because it is infrequent, based on superficial observations and unimportant criteria. Teachers feel that evaluators lack content and pedagogical knowledge as well as skills in observation. The learning opportunities available to teachers are generally limited. Most often, in-service training programmes are poorly coordinated, infrequently offered, and do not meet the needs of teachers. Teachers' workplaces are further muddled by policies that attempt to maximise their effectiveness by introducing incentives and disincentives. Reforms such as merit-pay systems are not only considered unfair, but they also increase the workload of teachers and reduce their autonomy, collaboration, and commitment.

2.1.4 Teacher identity

Teacher identity is perhaps the most widely used concept in recent studies focusing on teachers. As a teacher, one not only acquires knowledge and skills, but also develops an understanding of what it means to be a teacher, both from their own perspective and from the perspective of others (Sachs, 2005). In choosing what kind of teacher one wishes to become or what kind of professional identity one seeks to develop, a teacher may draw upon their experiences as a student, their personal and professional history, and, most importantly, the depiction of teachers in popular culture (Sachs, 2005). Before proceeding further, it must be noted that the term identity, though widely used in social sciences, is surprisingly elusive. The definition of identity by scholars from different theoretical perspectives varies substantially from one another. Thus, Lawler (2014) writes:

> My sense of myself, others' perceptions of me, my reactions to others' perceptions, the social categories that attach themselves to me and to which I attach myself – all may be referred to as 'identity', yet clearly there are important differences between them. Any discussion of identity always means we are in the presence of not one but many persons – or perceptions of a person. (p. 7-8)

In studies of teacher identity, subtle differences in meaning can also be discerned by observing the way certain words are associated with the concept, such as ‘development’ of identity, ‘construction’ of identity, identity ‘formation’, ‘identity making’, ‘creating’ an identity, ‘shaping’ an identity, ‘building’ an identity and even the ‘architecture’ of teacher’s professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Nevertheless, identity remains a crucial concept in studies on teachers and teaching because teachers essentially teach who they are (Palmer, 1997).

Teacher identity formation is a complex process, and studies have identified a number of factors that influence this process. For example, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) suggest that beginning teachers negotiate at least three conceptions of self-identity: the “pre-teaching” image of themselves as teachers that they bring to teacher education; the “fictive” image that develops as they learn to teach; and the “lived” image that develops during their interaction with students during the practicum (p, 67). A teacher’s early experiences in the profession may confirm or undermine their perception of suitability and capacity, setting them on distinct trajectories of teacher identity (Morrison, 2013). Hong et al. (2018) employ the terms coping and managing to describe how early career teachers deal with challenges and uncertainties in the classroom, the school, and the policy environment. The act of coping involves passively reacting to a challenge, resulting in an unstable, negative professional identity. In contrast, managing involves actively resolving challenges and establishing a positive, stable sense of identity. McCormack and Gore (2008) identify exercise of power as one of the influences on the development of teacher identity. Practices through which power is subtly exercised, such as classifying early career teachers as different from veterans, stifle the identity development of the former. In the context of India, teachers working in government schools are expected to play a diversity of roles such as learning facilitator, school administrator, civil servant,

community mobiliser etc. Ramachandran et al. (2018) argue that this culture creates suboptimal teacher identities because teachers experience conflict between different roles.

2.1.5 Teacher vulnerability

Palmer (1997) describes teaching as "a daily exercise in vulnerability" (p. 18). Working at the intersection of personal and public lives, teachers are vulnerable to indifference, judgment, and ridicule. This viewpoint is taken even further by Kelchtermans (2005) who argues that vulnerability is "not an emotion, but a *structural condition*" of teachers' working lives (p. 998, emphasis original). There are three sources of vulnerability identified by Kelchtermans (2011):

- **Educational administration/policy:** In the absence of tenure, teachers are faced with uncertainty and pressure to perform. Teachers are adversely affected by organizational changes such as school mergers, yet such decisions are made without consulting them. Furthermore, larger policy reforms involving budget cuts, standardization, decentralization, and so forth may threaten the commitment and wellbeing of teachers.
- **Professional relationships in schools:** Schools often lack consensus regarding both the means and the ends of education. Often, teachers, principals, and even parents have differing views on what constitutes a "good education." This leads to vulnerability when teachers feel powerless to change systems or pursue what they believe to be right. Criticism from parents can also exacerbate teacher vulnerability. Working with contradictory demands and expectations, as well as a high level of visibility, teachers generally feel insecure.
- **Limits to Teachers' Efficacy:** A teacher's effort is only one of many factors that influence students' learning. Teachers who are unable to come to terms with this truth feel ineffective when students do not learn as expected. They see students' failure as

their failure. In particular, highly committed beginning teachers are vulnerable to disappointment of this kind.

To summarise, the vulnerability of teachers exists because they do not have full control over the conditions in which they work, they cannot confidently demonstrate their effectiveness by referring to the achievements of their students, and all their decisions, actions, and justifications are subject to criticism. Additionally, Gao's (2008) study has shown that cultural traditions can exacerbate teachers' sense of vulnerability by imposing burdens on them and placing them under close scrutiny. In order to use this concept in empirical research, Day et al. (2007) defined teacher vulnerability as an inability to cope effectively with challenging circumstances, a lack of sense of agency, a sense of helplessness, or submissiveness or compliance which may last a short or long period of time. Thus, vulnerability among teachers can be viewed as both a structural and a personal phenomenon. There are several contextual and personal factors that influence the extent to which teachers experience vulnerability and how they cope with it. Teachers who are resilient thrive in adverse circumstances and feel a sense of pride and fulfilment.

2.1.6 Deprofessionalisation, deskilling, and demoralisation

There has been much debate over whether teaching is a profession or whether it should strive to be one (for a detailed discussion of this debate see Reis Monteiro, 2015, pp. 47-102). Functionalist scholars claim that there are objective traits of ideal-type professions. A profession typically performs an essential service or task, requires a high level of expertise and judgment, thus necessitating extensive pre-service education, functions based on an ideal of service, possesses autonomy in the workplace, receives a high level of remuneration and has colleagues in control of selection, training, and advancement in the field (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2009). From the functionalist perspective, professionalisation of an occupation entails the acquisition of these characteristics. Many scholars, policymakers and teachers have

asserted that the occupation of teaching is undergoing professionalisation (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Hargreaves, 2000; Gore & Morrison, 2001). However, teaching is generally treated as a "semi-profession" (Ingersoll & Collins, 2018).

The education systems of many countries have been dominated by neoliberal ideas and managerialism since the 1990s, and this trend continues today. Several concepts have surfaced in education research to capture the detrimental effects of this trend on teachers, including deskilling and intensification of teachers' work (Apple, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994), deprofessionalisation (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996), and demoralisation (Tsang & Liu, 2016).

Drawing from the studies of the labour process, researchers have argued that Taylorist strategies in education deskill teachers by separating the conception of tasks from execution and fragmenting their work into a multitude of meaningless and routine sub-tasks (Seddon & Palmieri, 2009). Further contributing to the deskilling of teachers is the trend towards "teacher-proofing" learning and the expansion of reporting and administrative work in order to satisfy accountability mandates. Under managerial control, teachers lose their discretion over time and work. Despite disvaluing many of their non-teaching responsibilities, they are powerless to avoid them. Jeffrey and Woods (1996) describe teacher deprofessionalisation in similar terms but emphasise the emotional trauma teachers experience through this process. According to them teacher deprofessionalisation involves:

> the loss or distillation of skills, routinisation of work, the loss of conceptual, as opposed to operational, responsibilities, the replacement of holism by compartmentalisation, work and bureaucratic overload, the filling and over-filling of time and space, loss of time for reflection and for recovery from stress, the weakening of control and autonomy and, in general, a move from professional to technician status. (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996, p. 328)

The term teacher demoralisation describes similar negative emotional experiences that affect the well-being of teachers. Teachers feel demoralised if they perceive the school context as unfavourable to their objectives (Tsang & Liu, 2016). Education administration can structurally

disempower teachers, but even when school reforms do not directly disempower teachers (for example, when teachers are expected to perform non-teaching work most of the time), teacher morale may be negatively affected. Low morale schools tend to be characterized by excessive supervision, a lack of communication and consultation as well as a lack of trust (Tsang & Liu, 2016). The focus of supervision is generally on non-teaching matters which leads dissatisfied teachers to question the purpose of supervision. In addition to being left out of major decision-making processes (technical disempowerment), teachers have little understanding of the rationale behind many decisions (cognitive disempowerment) (Tsang & Liu, 2016). In addition, teachers feel that they are not trusted by the administration, which has an indifferent attitude toward their concerns. A widening chasm exists between teachers' expectations and reality, resulting in what Duke (1984) referred to as "domains of disappointment" (p. 5). It is surprising that the reasons listed by Duke in 1984 for disappointment in the American teaching workforce (Table 2.1) are equally applicable to contemporary Indian teachers.

Reforms in education can also negatively affect teacher morale. The abolition of corporal punishment in South Africa in 1996 caused a great deal of disgruntlement among teachers (Naong, 2007). Teachers pointed out that without corporal punishment it would be impossible to maintain discipline and children would neither respect teachers nor work hard. Although the abolition of corporal punishment was a progressive step, teachers were neither trained nor convinced to use nonviolent methods when dealing with indiscipline. They regarded the reform as a process of disempowerment. The study highlights the necessity of enabling teachers to participate in reform processes rather than expecting them to implement reforms formulated at the top in a mechanical way.

Table 2.1

Domains of disappointment for teachers

Domain	Expectations	Reality
Teaching tasks	- Autonomy - Opportunity to exercise personal judgement - Challenging work - Goal clarity - Security	- Rules and procedures (formalisation) - Routine work - Ambiguity regarding goals - Insecurity
Students	- Motivation to learn - Willingness to respond to reason - Respect for authority	- Apathy - Behaviour problems
Societal context	- Public support and appreciation - Adequate resources - Professional discretion	- Public criticism and impugning of motives - Increasing pressure for greater results - Diminishing resources - Legal and governmental constraints
Higher education	- Training based on technical skills - Availability of scholarly assistance - Opportunities for continuing professional growth	- Training based on general knowledge - Research criticizing teachers - Trivial in-service programs
Externally based innovation	- School improvement is non-political	- School improvement is highly political - Innovations can leave schools worse off than before
Professional activities	- Collegiality - Cooperation between teachers - Commitment to high ideals	- Isolation - Competition between teachers - Commitment to material self-interests

(Duke, 1984, p. 5)

2.2 Studies on early career teachers

As mentioned in chapter 1, researchers characterise the early years of teachers' careers as a period of survival and discovery. This section discusses in detail some notable studies on early career teachers' concerns and experiences. As Katz (1985) defines it, teachers' concerns can be summed up as "aspects of their work that most preoccupy them and are most salient to them" (p.779). Fuller and her colleagues conducted the earliest studies on teacher concerns in the

1960s (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975). They identified three stages of teacher development, each characterised by a distinct set of concerns. Stage one is characterised by concerns about self and survival. Teachers are concerned about “class control, being liked by pupils, about supervisors’ opinions, about being observed, evaluated, praised and failed” (Fuller & Bown 1975, p. 37). The second stage is characterised as concerns about tasks/situations. Teachers strive for competence and are most concerned with various aspects of the teaching environment, the number of students, time constraints, teaching materials, and everyday frustrations associated with teaching. In the third stage of development teachers become more concerned about their impact on students. After settling into a routine behaviour, they consider how they can meet the needs of their students.

According to this model, teachers’ early self-centred concerns are less mature and desirable than their later student-centred concerns. It is also critical to note that later concerns cannot emerge until earlier concerns have been resolved. However, studies conducted later (Guillaume & Rudney, 1993; Burden, 1990; Watzke, 2007) disagree with the argument regarding the hierarchy, duration and sequence of teachers’ concerns. Based on their findings, teachers do not experience concerns in a predetermined sequence nor do they resolve one prior to moving on to the next, but rather deal with them simultaneously. Furthermore, concerns may resurface if a particular experience or context triggers them.

However, several stage theories were developed based on the Fuller model. Ryan’s (1986, as cited in Bullough Jr, 1997, p. 88) model provides an interesting example. There are four general stages identified by Ryan, namely, the fantasy stage, the survival stage, the mastery stage, and the impact stage. During the fantasy stage, the novice teacher imagines what teaching will be like and envisions herself as one of those wonderful teachers of her past. The fantasy is interrupted by the preservice teaching experience but returns for those who persevere in their desire to become teachers. Transitioning from student teaching to a first teaching position often

proves to be a challenging process. Beginning teachers quickly discover that their previous knowledge is inadequate for the job. The survival stage begins as the fantasy crumbles. The problems with student discipline and school management continue to worsen, but this phase is likely to pass before the end of the first year of employment. The majority of teachers eventually gain control of classroom discipline and enter the mastery stage. During this stage they concentrate on improving their teaching skills and learning the craft of teaching. The last stage involves teachers focusing on improving student learning rather than disciplining students.

A notable feature of these models is their close resemblance to Maslow's (1943,1987) much cited theory of human motivation. The theory presents a hierarchy of five kinds of human needs. Arranged from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, the needs are: physiological needs, the need for safety, the need for love and belonging, the need for esteem, and the need for self-actualization. When a lower order need is met, a higher order need becomes apparent. In the context of teacher development, it means that in order to be autonomous or self-actualized, beginning teachers must first satisfy needs such as security, belonging, and self-esteem. Can this argument be supported by the facts? In order to answer this question, we need to turn to studies that examined the needs, experiences and problems of early career teachers.

According to Veenman's (1984) review of the literature on the perceived difficulties faced by beginning teachers, there are eight problems that have surfaced in most studies: classroom discipline, motivating students, addressing individual differences, evaluating students' work, relationships with parents, organisation of classroom activities, inadequate teaching materials, and dealing with the problems of individual students. Several studies describe the transition from training to teaching, often referred to as 'reality shock', 'transition shock', and 'praxis shock', as a dramatic and traumatic experience (Veenman, 1984, p. 143). It involves moving from an idealised vision of teaching to the harsh and complex reality of everyday classroom

life (Johnson et al., 2010). However, the term shock gives the impression that the transition is an instantaneous event. To be more accurate, it is a continuous process since it takes time to assimilate and master reality.

There are several signs of reality shock, including: experiencing problems (for example, heavy workload, physical and mental stress), feeling forced to behave in a way contrary to one's beliefs, a change in beliefs and attitudes (for example shift from progressive to conservative teaching methods), changes related to personality (self-concept) and the decision to leave the profession (Veenman, 1984, p. 144). It is not uncommon for early career teachers to feel incompetent and frustrated when their students do not learn as expected. Left to their own devices, they conclude that they are ineffective and have chosen a profession for which they are not suited (Brock & Grady, 2007).

According to Müller-Fohrbrodt et al. (1978, as cited in Veenman, 1984, p. 147) there are personal as well as situational causes responsible for beginning teachers' experience of reality shock. A wrong career choice, inappropriate attitudes, and an unsuitable personality can all be personal factors. Situational causes include inadequate professional training and a problematic school context. Teachers' pre-service education is often criticised for not preparing teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the demands of classroom teaching and classroom management (Johnson et al., 2010). There can be a variety of problems in schools, ranging from an authoritarian culture to inadequate resources and strained relationships. Studies have shown that several recent changes in schools contribute to the deskilling of teachers and their loss of enthusiasm to carry out their duties creatively. Furthermore, the selection criteria for teachers may also be viewed as responsible. The number of quality induction programs for early career teachers is far too small. Most teachers are left to 'sink or swim' and learn by 'trial and error' in their first year and school leaders either lack the skills or are too busy to support early career teachers effectively (Johnson et al., 2010).

The table 2.2 prepared by Quaglia (1989) based on the analysis of previous empirical studies provides an excellent summary of typical mismatches between beginning teachers' expectations and their actual experiences.

Table 2.2

Difference between early career teachers' expectations and experiences

Individual Inputs		
Inputs	Expectations	Experiences
Classroom Management	Difficult but manageable/ Students are willing to learn and easily motivated	Very demanding and stressful/ Students don't care and are difficult to motivate
Past Experiences	Will be similar to future situations	Past experiences do not coincide with present ones
Personal Life	Separate personal from professional life/ plenty of time to prepare	There is no separation/ takes up all free time
Subject Matter	Strong knowledge	Strong knowledge
Teaching Methods	Ability to teach all students	Inability to reach students with a wide range of ability
Training	Attitude and behaviour open and flexible	Become rigid and structured
Organisational Inputs		
Inputs	Expectations	Experiences
Assignments	Would be treated fairly	Usually given the most difficult classes and assignments that no one else wants
Colleagues	Giving support and guidance	Giving support and guidance (although limited)
Culture of Organisation	Colleagues, students and parents are all thoroughly committed to education	Lack of care and true commitment
Policy and Procedures	Special policies and procedures will be provided	No special policy and procedures were available
Principal	Can turn to him/her for support and guidance	Seen as the evaluator, someone distant

(Quaglia, 1989, p. 6)

Despite the constraints imposed by school structure and culture on early career teachers, portraying them as helpless would be misleading. They too exercise agency and try to create their own social reality by acting according to their personal vision (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014).

The first year of teaching is not only an introduction to the profession, but also an introduction to adult life with all its responsibilities (moving away from home, finding new accommodations, making friends, starting a family, etc.) (Veenman, 1984; Brock & Grady, 2007). Upon entering the profession, beginning teachers are faced with the restrictions and responsibilities of professional life, making their first year a period of tremendous learning. "Yesterday, they were blue-jeaned students groaning about professors' lectures and anticipating weekend parties. Today, they are teachers who are expected to look, behave, and speak as professionals" (Brock & Grady, 2007, p. 5). The familiar support of their campus friends and college professors is no longer available to them. Those who have recently married might be experiencing additional stress from adjusting to a new partner.

As the objective differences between the old and new settings become more significant, the individual is forced to deal with a variety of challenges (Louis, 1980). With a new job, a person is likely to acquire a new address, a new telephone number, a new office, a new work, a new boss, as well as a new way of dressing. It can take some time for these changes to become familiar. It is important to note that not all changes matter to every newcomer, and that prior expectations may remain unmet or only partially met in the new environment (Louis, 1980). It is therefore possible for early career teachers to have a wide variety of experiences, making it difficult to develop a support and induction program for them.

For example, Spencer et al. (2018) report that early career teachers in England find themselves in need of emotional support, guidance on managing students' behaviour, creative ideas for classroom activities, and opportunities to reflect upon teaching practices. Although teachers perceive emotional support as their greatest need, it is the one that gets the least attention. In addition to seeking assistance from their employers, they also seek resources from outside sources. The most popular source of information is the internet, including social media, blogs, and websites.

Each major transition and role change in life involves socialisation. Upon successful socialisation, newcomers become members of the community. Their status as insiders is evident when they are assigned significant responsibilities and autonomy, granted access to "privileged" information, accepted into informal networks, given the opportunity to represent the organization, and asked for advice and counsel (Louis, 1980). In what ways does teacher socialisation take place? Teachers' socialisation patterns are shaped both by individual and institutional factors. The personal and professional backgrounds of teachers, their worldviews, local contexts, professional cultures, policy environments, and accountability systems, etc. operate at different levels and influence teacher socialisation (Achinstein et al., 2004). Induction programs are widely implemented as a means of optimizing teacher socialisation. As opposed to informal support from colleagues, induction programs provide systematic and official support for newly hired teachers. Induction programs vary in length and contents between countries. Nevertheless, most induction programs include mentoring, orientation, workshops, distribution of written materials, classroom observation, and a reduction in workload (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

2.3 Studies on teachers' lives in the Indian context

> The Report of the Education Commission of 1964-66 (Kothari Commission, 1966) begins with the statement: "The destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms", suggesting that teachers are the destiny makers. The National Policy on Education [GoI 1986: section IX] states: "No person in the society should rise above (sic) the status of a teacher". (Kingdon and Muzammil, 2001, p. 3054)

The National Education Policy (NEP) of India, 2020 emphasizes the critical role of teachers in shaping the future of our children - and, therefore, the future of our nation. This sentiment has been reflected in previous NEPs, which have also underscored the importance of teachers as professionals with significant responsibilities for the nation. However, it seems that educational research in the Indian context has prioritised pressing issues such as school quality, access,

equity, and policy evaluation, while neglecting the vital role of teachers. Existing research on Indian teachers working in government schools largely suggests that they are falling short of the high expectations outlined in successive NEPs. In this section, we discuss some prominent studies that provide insights into the lives of teachers.

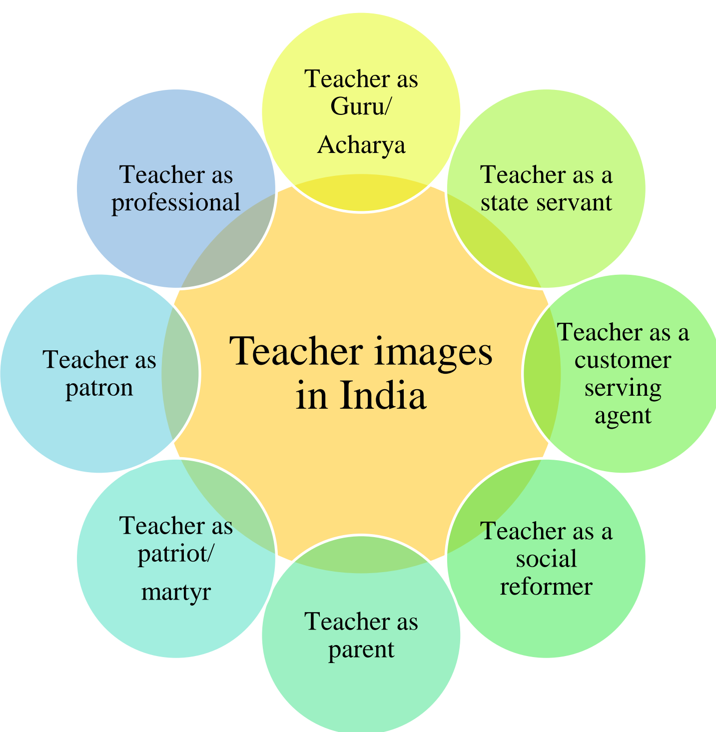
2.3.1 Teacher images in India

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Indian education has evolved significantly over the last few centuries. In tandem with this metamorphosis, the roles and responsibilities of teachers, their status, power and lifestyles have also changed. However, there are a few continuities. A variety of discourses concerning teachers circulate in contemporary Indian society. Certain discourses act as a counterpoint to one another, while others serve as a complementary force. In each discourse, teachers are portrayed in a certain light and an image emerges. Though some of the images have distant origins and others are relatively recent, they all have a significant impact on the social identity and self-perception of teachers. Through their beings and doings, Indian teachers strive to embody one or more of these images (Figure 2.1).

Guru/Acharya is perhaps the oldest and most powerful image of contemporary teachers. In addition to being a teacher in the pedagogical sense, the term guru also refers to a spiritual guide (Kale, 1970). Due to the custom of oral transmission of knowledge in ancient India, the guru was indispensable for education and the guru's words were as authoritative as the Shastras. As a result of the Buddhist, Jain, and Bhakti movements the guru became a mystic figure, a prophet, and a person deserving of faith, obedience and devotion. Guru also symbolises a being who is not only wise, but also morally upright and above material concerns.

Figure 2.1

Teacher images in India



(Based on Kale, 1970; Sarangapani, 2003, pp. 109–117; Abrol, 2017)

During the colonial period, the introduction of modern education system gave rise to the notion of the teacher as a state servant (Kumar, 2005). The prescribed curricula and textbooks determined what was to be taught, how and when. Since teachers were appointed as state functionaries and paid salaries, they became responsible for considerable clerical work including keeping records of admissions, attendance, examinations, and expenditures. In addition, they were required to perform occasional duties, such as dispensing postal material, helping with census work, distributing textbooks, etc. "The range of functions that a schoolteacher could be asked to perform was itself a testimony of his low status and the non-specialised image of his job" (Kumar, 2005, p. 76). School teachers, even at that time, were regarded as the conscience keepers of the community (Majumdar, 2011).

During the struggle for independence, many teachers emerged as nationalists and actively participated in social reform initiatives (Acharya & Krishan, 2010). Through activities such as raising awareness of untouchability, writing patriotic poems, and encouraging students to get involved in relief activities during famines and floods, these teachers became role models for future generations. National development became the primary objective after independence, and the teacher assumed the role of nation-builder (Kale, 1970). All Five-Year Plans and all Education Committees emphasised the importance of teachers in promoting national development as well as preserving India's cultural heritage.

The image of a teacher as a customer serving agent is also prevalent in India. The teachers at private educational institutes and coaching centres serve the students as customers. In the wake of liberalisation, a number of such institutes have emerged, some of which charge exorbitant fees for their services. Teachers exploit the neoliberal market by commodifying their knowledge and skills (Gupta, 2021).

According to Sarangapani (2003), teachers can position themselves in a range of ways that are even more fundamental. To a child, a teacher represents an adult. As an adult, a teacher naturally feels ahead of children in matters pertaining to knowledge and the world of adults. Also, as adults, teachers feel they can exercise power over children. The relationship between teachers and children is often compared to that of a parent and a child. As with parents, teachers often believe they care for their students and their actions are always benevolent. Like parents, they expect respect and obedience from their students. In some cases, teachers describe their work as a form of patriotism, a sacrifice for the betterment of society. Some teachers, especially those belonging to the upper castes, regard themselves as cultural elites and behave in a patronising manner. Some teachers are members of the local political elite and have direct or indirect involvement in politics, due to which their image as politicians is also prevalent (Kingdon & Muzammil, 2009; Majumdar, 2011).

It is interesting to note that teachers in India do not have a popular image of being educationists or intellectuals, even though many teachers have achieved such prominence. Almost since the beginning of modern education in the colonial period, college teaching has been regarded as an intellectual profession, while school teaching, particularly at the primary level, has been viewed as a low-ranking office position (Kumar, 2005). Teachers therefore find themselves in a contradictory position where they have low status and little control over the curriculum, while at the same time they exercise full moral, parental and adult's authority over their students. Kumar (2005) describes the teacher as a "meek dictator" to highlight this contradiction (p. 73). In 2005, Batra wrote: "The reality is more nuanced and complex, with most schoolteachers across the country being under-trained, misqualified, under-compensated, demotivated instruments of a mechanical system of education that was initially conceived as a support to a colonial regime" (p. 4347). Now that the RTE Act has been enacted, we must ask what has changed. Based on the available literature, the following subsections attempt to provide a composite picture of teachers' lives in India. It is critical to note that the studies included here are not comprehensive and the findings should not be regarded as generalisations applicable to all teachers.

2.3.2 Reasons for becoming a teacher

The PROBE (1999) report argues that teaching in government schools has evolved to the point that it is a job that easily attracts non-committed individuals and deters those who feel committed to education. The perception in rural areas is that teaching in government schools is a lucrative job, with good salaries, stable employment, and ample free time for other pursuits. It is these perks that motivate people to become teachers even when they are not intrinsically motivated to do so. Some teachers feel that Indian society accords a low status to school teachers. Typically, they report that their circumstances forced them to accept teaching positions although they could have pursued jobs with higher status under different

circumstances (Sarangapani, 2003). Some teachers choose to become teachers as a last resort after being unable to pursue their preferred career paths. Teaching is viewed by some teachers as a stopgap measure while they prepare for other jobs or competitive examinations. Few teachers decide to enter the profession consciously due to the inherent “nobility” of the profession or because they are inspired by their parents or teachers (Ramachandran et al., 2005).

According to some female teachers, teaching is the ideal profession for women since it allows them to work outside their homes without having to sacrifice family responsibilities (Sarangapani, 2003). Females may also choose this profession due to its respectability, security, and reduced workload. Moreover, this job is usually preferred and recommended by their parents or husbands (Ramachandran et al., 2005). The primary school teaching profession is not the first choice of many teachers. Teachers’ accounts of their entry into teaching often contains some ambivalence (Sriprakash, 2011). Some teachers enter the teaching profession primarily to increase their economic standing and to ensure job security. The teaching profession is viewed as a means of social mobility. A lack of educational opportunities and economic hardships motivate many people to pursue a career as a teacher. The teacher recruitment system fails to separate candidates with aptitude and interest from those who do not possess either (Ramachandran et al., 2008).

2.3.3 Preparedness for teaching

In popular parlance, teachers are ‘trained’ rather than ‘educated’ (Hall & Millard, 1994). Training involves both theory and practice. Observable and demonstrable competencies are expected of teachers. Training, however, has a narrower definition than education. The conventional teacher education programmes in India prepare teachers for mechanically planning lessons in standard formats, delivering lessons, organising school assemblies, and performing other routine activities (Batra, 2005). This process does not disturb trainees’

underlying assumptions regarding knowledge and curriculum. Moreover, the pre-service training programmes are designed based on the flawed premise that trainees already have an adequate understanding of school subjects and would be capable of teaching in an ideal setting. Thus, training programmes are not appropriate for dealing with the actual conditions in government schools.

> These courses assume that teachers will have a homogenous community of learners, adequate infrastructure and TLM and the luxury of teaching a single class at a time. The real conditions that prevail in most government primary schools across the country are never addressed; thus teacher candidates spend a year or two receiving and being tested on a vast amount of theoretical knowledge that is of little help in real classroom situations. (Ramachandran et al., 2008, pp. 64–65)

Training for in-service teachers follows a cascade model, in which some teachers attend training and then disseminate it to their colleagues at various levels. The goal is to equip teachers to implement policies decided at the top level. In-service training is carried out in an ad hoc manner, subject to the availability of funds and unaligned with the needs of teachers (Ramachandran et al., 2018). Shulman (1986) wrote that "the teacher need not only understand that something is so; the teacher must further understand *why* it is so" (p. 9, emphasis original). In the preservice and in-service training programs, as well as teacher eligibility tests and recruitment tests, there is a strong emphasis on "something is so." Teachers are rarely encouraged to explore anything deeper - the "whys".

2.3.4 Teacher's working conditions

The PROBE (1999) report identifies several disempowering and demotivating aspects of teachers' working contexts: "A teacher trapped in a ramshackle village school, surrounded by disgruntled parents, irregular pupils and overbearing inspectors, can hardly be expected to work with any enthusiasm" (p. 63). Teachers' workplace is plagued by many issues, including poor infrastructure, parental apathy, persistent problems with students, an unrealistic curriculum, undesired postings, excessive paperwork, and unsupportive management (PROBE, 1999). The

lack of infrastructure and resources in government schools can vary from the non-availability of essential materials, such as chalk and textbooks, to larger issues such as the lack of classrooms, functional toilets, and safe water sources. Teaching children with limited resources is a challenge for teachers. When parents fail to reciprocate their efforts, teachers become frustrated. The PROBE (1999) report notes that many parents do not send their children to school regularly or send them late or in dirty clothing. Many parents do not attend parent-teacher meetings. Some members of the local community engage in irresponsible and obstructionist activities such as vandalising, stealing, and abusing school resources.

At home, children do not have a conducive environment for studying. Furthermore, there are issues such as malnutrition, poor health, and the burden of household chores. Teachers also feel that the school curriculum is challenging for most young students. However, they are not encouraged to think as educators. Thus, they resign themselves to the role of unenthusiastic and unthinking implementers of top-down initiatives (Majumdar, 2006).

Unwanted postings and arbitrary transfers are regarded as constant threats. Teachers spend a great deal of time and energy cultivating relationships and lobbying in order to avoid undesirable transfers or to secure a desirable posting (Béteille, 2015; PROBE, 1999).

Over the past few years, the burden of paperwork and non-teaching responsibilities has also grown, particularly with the introduction of various incentive programs for students. There are numerous formats in which teachers are required to enter data and submit the same statistics to various higher authorities on a regular basis and upon request. “Consequently and perversely, teachers tend to ‘cook up data’ to generate ‘paper truths’” (Majumdar, 2011, p. 50).

School management not only fails to address the obvious problems teachers face but is also a source of harassment from time to time (PROBE, 1999). The efforts of an effective teacher are not recognized. Despite expecting reforms in schools, the education bureaucracy offers little

academic support to teachers (Sriprakash, 2012). Teachers believe that school administrators do not pay as much attention to the quality of teaching as they do to school records, enrolment figures, incentive schemes, and other administrative matters. Aside from officers' inability or reluctance to provide constructive feedback, their impatience, disregard for teachers and obsession with finding faults and shortcomings, make the relationship between teachers and officials a site of tension (Sriprakash, 2012). Unsurprisingly most teacher eventually realise that "conscientious teaching is the least prominent and the most thankless of the activities they are expected to perform" (PROBE, 1999, p. 62). Also, teachers themselves do not find the government education system desirable for their own children (Sriprakash, 2012).

The PROBE (1999) report indicates that early career teachers in government schools tend to lose motivation as they progress through their careers. The report notes, "among recently appointed teachers we often met people with genuine enthusiasm. The honeymoon, however, is usually short-lived, as the morale of young teachers is battered day after day" (p. 58).

Within a school, there is no institutional hierarchy among teachers. All teachers are equal and below the head teacher. However, as Sarangapani (2003) reports, there are instances in which teachers seek to establish hierarchy among themselves. For example, teachers may use their caste or class positions, their educational achievements, or their involvement in additional profit-making work or politics as a means of elevating themselves above their peers. Patriarchal norms prevail in schools. Cases of sexual harassment are not common among teachers, but the PROBE (1999) report mentions that some female teachers are treated as second-class employees by their male colleagues.

> In several cases, the female teacher was bossed around by junior male teachers, e.g. asked to make tea while they talked with the PROBE investigators. Female teachers were almost invariably expected to fetch the registers, irrespective of their formal status. In one school, the headmaster had no knowledge of what was happening in the school; the questions had to be answered by the female teacher, who was obviously doing all the work. In Gingla (Udaipur,

> Rajasthan), the four male teachers sat on chairs talking to the PROBE investigators while the female teacher, who was pregnant, stood behind them with her face veiled. (PROBE, 1999, p. 62)

2.3.5 Teachers' attitudes and beliefs

Teachers' viewpoints are not simply opinions, but rather elaborate worldviews that are often shared by parents, administrators, and even students (Sarangapani, 2003). The beliefs and attitudes of teachers influence their everyday activities as well as their decision-making processes.

Teachers have different views on what makes a good teacher, but some common traits include being soft spoken, tolerant, kind-hearted, hardworking, honest and punctual, devoid of bad habits and well-dressed (Batra, 2005), impartial, sensitive, flexible, inspiring and intimate with children (Majumdar, 2011), personable, maternal, democratic and reflexive (Sriprakash, 2011).

Many teachers believe that education should facilitate the development of moral character and citizenship values (Sarangapani, 2003). Nevertheless, teachers also believe that children are not equal and not all children deserve the same quality of education (Brinkmann, 2019). Some teachers have a pessimistic view of rural children's educational potential and believe that despite their best efforts, village children will never attain much (Sarangapani, 2003). There is a perception among teachers that rural communities are uncivilised, uneducated, and backward and rural children are undisciplined (Sriprakash, 2012). Discourses about class and caste are also entwined with this perception. Teachers believe that there has been a decline in the quality of government schools mainly because a large number of children from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) backgrounds are attending school (Majumdar, 2011). Teachers describe villagers as superstitious, lazy and lacking in hygienic practices, culture, and technology. Teachers believe that illiterate parents are generally disinterested in the education

of their children. Teachers hold them responsible for dysfunctional parent-teacher associations (Sarangapani, 2003).

This deficit discourse is used to legitimise school as an institution intended for the socialisation and moral development of children from these communities. Besides the school's civilizing mission, this perception contributes to teachers' legitimisation of the school's disciplining role and the authority of the teacher. When teachers emphasise the discipline of their students, they can be referring to the teaching of obedience, piety, respect, good habits and manners, hygiene and self-presentation, as well as a strong work ethic and a commitment to studying (Sriprakash, 2012). It is not just teachers, but communities and students also share the belief that disciplining students is a core function of schools (Sarangapani, 2003). Unsurprisingly, many teachers hold that in order to instil discipline corporal punishment is necessary (Sarangapani, 2003). Teachers do not think that their beating of children implies that they do not love children. In contrast, they beat because they care about children, just as their parents do (Sriprakash, 2012).

Students who are struggling with basic literacy and numeracy are sometimes treated differently by teachers. Sarangapani (2003) reported that rather than paying attention to these students, teachers often assigned them manual chores as if they were destined to for the world of labour-intensive insecure employment or unemployment.

According to Brinkmann's (2019) study, teachers hold a number of beliefs that are in opposition to learner-centred educational reforms. These are:

- Students do not have the ability to think independently.
- Learning involves passively receiving pre-packed knowledge transmitted by textbooks or teachers (as opposed to students constructing knowledge by exploration)
- Learner-Centred Education (LCE) means using songs, actions, games or drawings along with textbooks so that children learn faster and remember for a long time.
- Teachers must control children through fear and discipline, rather than favouring democratic and friendly teacher student relationships: 'Sometimes I take a stick and beat the table with it. This creates fear in the children, so I need not actually beat them'.

- The purpose of education and of life is related to individual socio-economic mobility. So, focus should be on achieving high marks in order to attain high-status jobs.
- Duty means task completion rather than ensuring outcomes. Many teachers have a minimalist view of their duty as completing the syllabus regardless of whether or not students actually learn – if some students fail to learn it is often seen as due to children's lack of ability or family background, rather than the teacher's responsibility.
- Teachers view their purpose as merely earning a salary rather than any larger social contribution.
- Teaching is a low profession (low social status, poor salary, not rocket science, does not need talented people)
- Status quo is better (favouring tradition, not change), reinforce rather than challenge social hierarchies

While many teachers recognise the benefits of midday meals (MDM) in schools, many maintain that teachers should not be expected to supervise MDM activities (Majumdar, 2011). It is also generally held that the no-detention policy is a counterproductive policy because it allows even 'weak' students to be promoted automatically (Majumdar, 2011).

2.3.6 Teachers' work and accountability

According to Anitha (2005), government school teachers engage in broadly four types of activities in the classroom. The most non-educational type of classroom work is just taking care of students or 'domesticating' them. Teachers do not consider themselves anything more than caretakers of their students and prevent them from getting into mischief. The second type of classroom activity is teaching basic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic. Teachers believe that the purpose of primary education is to teach basic skills. Most of their classroom activities are poorly structured and consist of mechanical repetition of basic materials. The third type of classroom activity involves the transmission of information contained in textbooks to students to enable them to pass examinations. Teachers conduct well-structured but ritualistic classroom activities. The fourth type of classroom activities are aimed at connecting

knowledge, information, and skills with the child's experiences so that learning can become meaningful. In such classes, students engage in highly structured, logical, participatory activities that focus on developing higher order thinking skills.

Teachers' work in classrooms, being a topic of pedagogical research, falls outside the scope of this review. Therefore, instead of focusing on studies that analyse teachers' classroom practices, it would be helpful to discuss criticisms of their inactivity and inertia, which have probably received more attention in academic literature. There is a serious lack of accountability among primary school teachers in India according to the PROBE (1999) report. Some teachers are outright irresponsible. Most of the time, they are absent from school or arrive late and depart early. In some instances, teachers arrive drunk, while in others, children are engaged in a variety of chores. Nevertheless, a teacher's regular attendance, punctuality, and sobriety are not guarantees that teaching will take place. Most teachers are just inactive, "engaged in a variety of pastimes such as sipping tea, reading comics or eating peanuts" (PROBE, 1999, p. 63). Overall, the report concludes that the amount of time and effort spent on teaching has been reduced to a minimum. "And this pattern is not confined to a minority of irresponsible teachers — it has become a way of life in the profession" (PROBE, 1999, p. 63).

Teacher negligence may be caused by and a consequence of their involvement in additional profit-making activities. Kingdon and Muzammil (2001) write:

> Our observations in rural UP suggest that a good proportion of teachers own some side business apart from their school teaching work, such as bookshops, general stores and even small industries in towns and in the countryside. Sometimes they also work as contractors for the abundant public works, particularly in rural areas. (p. 3063)

The involvement of teachers in political activities, such as campaigning and contesting for elections, lobbying and strikes, can also divert their attention from teaching (Kingdon & Muzammil, 2009).

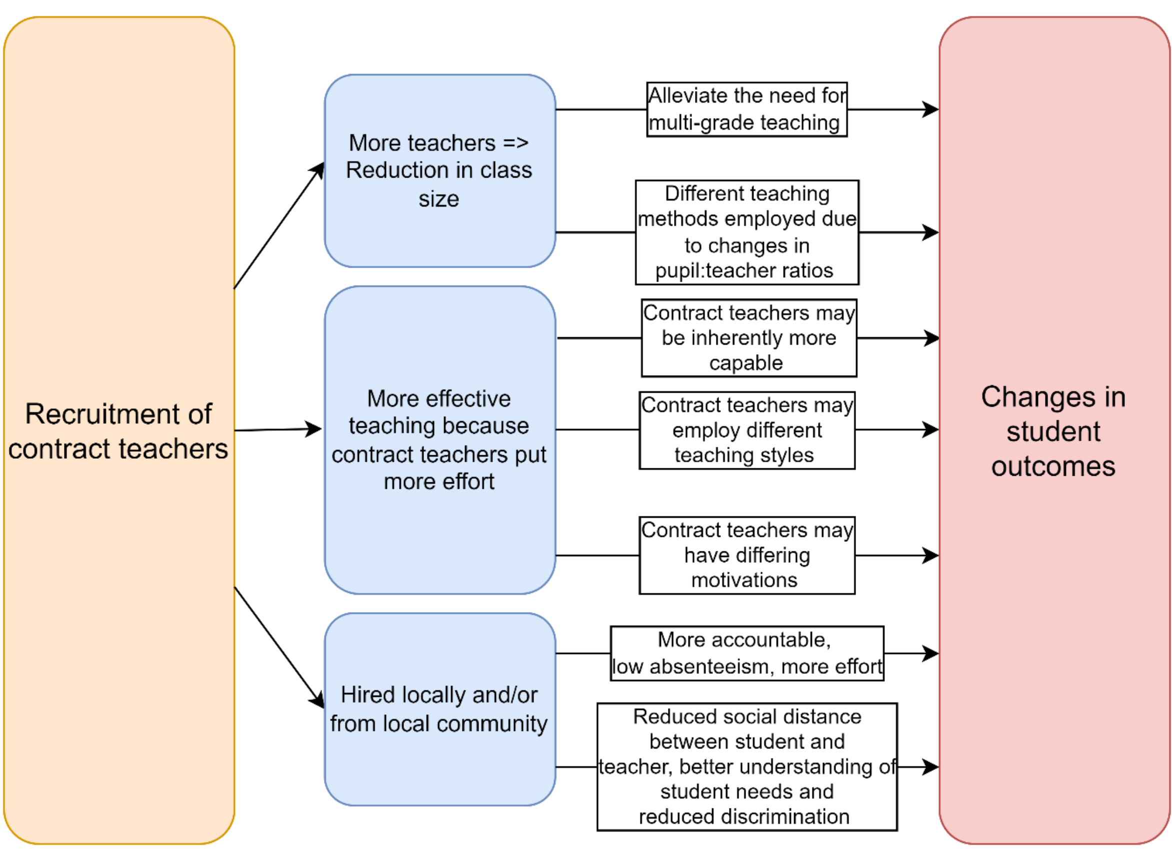
This section was an attempt to synthesise what we currently know about teachers working in government schools. The themes that guided this section are: social images of teachers, reasons for becoming teachers, the preparation of teachers, teachers' beliefs, their working conditions, and how they conduct themselves. There are no prominent studies focusing exclusively on early career teachers in the Indian context. However, there have been studies conducted on contract teachers who are also early career teachers. In the following section, we discuss studies on contract teachers in India.

2.4 Studies on contract teachers

During the last two decades, school enrolment rates have increased at an unprecedented rate in the developing world. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have resorted to hiring contract teachers due to severe teacher shortages and perceived financial constraints (Fyfe, 2007; Chudgar et al. 2014). There is a wide range of recruitment policies for contract teachers within and across countries. In most cases, contract teachers have lower educational requirements and are paid a fraction of the salary of regular or civil service teachers. As opposed to regular teachers, contract teachers are usually hired for a period of one or two years with the possibility of renewal. International organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have actively promoted the policy of hiring contract teachers as the solution to a range of problems affecting the educational system in developing countries (Klees, 2008). Figure 2.2 presents the prevailing theory of change that informs contract teacher hiring policy. A majority of studies on contract teachers have examined whether they are as effective as regular teachers in improving student outcomes (Atherton & Kingdon, 2010; Goyal & Pandey, 2013; Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2013; Duflo et al., 2015). In general, the research findings are positive (K. Kingdon et al., 2013), which has led researchers to advocate for the widespread use of contract teachers, with strict enforcement of their contracts.

Figure 2.2

Theory of change underpinning contract teacher hiring policy



(based on Kingdon *et al.*, 2013, p. 12)

The critics of contract teacher policies assert that hiring untrained youth as teachers on contract with poor pay contributes to the degradation of the professional status of teachers and, therefore, in the long run, will have a detrimental effect on education (Kaushik et al., 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012; Mukhopadhyay & Ali, 2021). Bourdieu (1998) writes, "[T]he salary granted is an unequivocal index of the value placed on the work and the corresponding workers. Contempt for a job is shown first of all in the more or less derisory remuneration it is given" (p. 3). Prior to discussing the debate regarding contract teachers, it would be useful to provide some background on the origin of contract teacher recruitment policies.

2.4.1 The emergence of contract teacher recruitment policy

The policy of recruiting contract teachers emerged at the intersection of two global movements in the 1980s and 90s. On the one hand, the internationalization of the Education for All (EFA) campaign compelled developing countries to expand their education systems for universal accessibility. The positive impact of primary education on a country's socio-economic development and competitiveness in the international market was one of the main justifications for this global objective (Welmond, 2002). The EFA campaign was soon followed by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of which was to achieve universal primary education. On the other hand, in this period, neoliberal thought emerged as the dominant paradigm, replacing development economics and the idea of a welfare state. As leading global agents of neoliberalism, the World Bank and IMF enforced policies and conditions known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) on developing countries in exchange for loans. SAPs required countries to 'liberalise trade barriers, eliminate subsidies, dismantle public services, privatize, deregulate, and promote markets as extensively as possible while "shrinking" the state' (Kamat, 2012, p. 35).

Meeting the financial resources to expand and improve the quality of the school systems was a major challenge for many countries. Many international financial institutions stepped in to offer financial assistance to health care and education programs in the developing world. The pressure to quickly expand educational access, the neoliberal ethos and external aid, together affected the education systems and the teacher management policies of many countries in numerous ways (Connell, 2009; Kablay, 2012; Klees, 2008). Both the issues of education systems and their solutions were framed in terms of economic costs and benefits. Each investment was to be weighed against others (primary vs. higher education, salaries vs. materials) to decide which would have the greatest impact on outcome and efficiency. Certain

types of education expenditures (such as primary education) were considered more effective and thus, legitimate than others (like higher education). The apparently contradictory objectives of expanding access to education while reducing expenditure were to be achieved through the pursuit of efficiency (Welmond, 2002).

Neoliberal policies imagined teachers as “one-dimensional economic beings” who were “governable via the metrics of the market, each serving primarily her own self-interests while working to maximize personal value in the market” (Attick, 2017, p. 38). In light of this, it is not surprising that for all teacher-related issues, such as teacher shortages, a lack of accountability, and ineffectiveness, typical policy solutions took the form of incentives and disincentives for teachers. It was argued that hiring teachers with renewable contracts rather than as permanent civil servants would provide the correct balance of incentives and disincentives. From an incentive standpoint, the absence of job stability could be expected to make contract teachers more accountable for performance (Bruns et al., 2011).

Rapidly expanding educational opportunities meant a sharp rise in student enrolment and teacher shortage. In 1993, the World Bank published a book titled *Teachers in Developing Countries: Improving Effectiveness and Managing Costs*. The book focused on improving the effectiveness of teachers through remuneration and managerial policies. In one of the chapters of this book, Manuel Zymelman, with Joseph De Stefano, suggests:

> Delink teachers from other civil servants; find ways to increase qualifications while mitigating budgetary impact, such as instituting different combinations of training and experience to produce the same teaching proficiency at lower levels of the salary scale; improve data collection and salary forecasting capacity (in order to locate inefficiencies); *abolish guaranteed employment for teachers.* (Quoted in Welmond, 2002, p. 41, emphasis added)

To address teacher shortages with a limited budget, many countries in South Asia, Africa and Latin America began hiring contract teachers. The Government of India launched the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994 with foreign aid. To fulfil one of the

conditionalities attached with the fund - that of filling existing teacher vacancies – several states of India resorted to recruiting contract teachers and stopped recruiting full-time permanent teachers (Mehendale & Mukhopadhyay, 2021). In light of the budget constraints facing many state governments, as well as the tremendous pressure to expand the primary education system, the appointment of teachers on lower salaries and contracts seemed an attractive option (Kaushik et al., 2009). Initially, contract teacher recruitment policies differed from state to state in terms of educational requirements, salaries, appointment bodies, and career prospects. Over the past two decades, these policies have also evolved differentially. Several states have stopped recruiting contract teachers while others, such as Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab recruit contract teachers and regularise their employment after a few years (for details see Ramachandran et al., 2018).

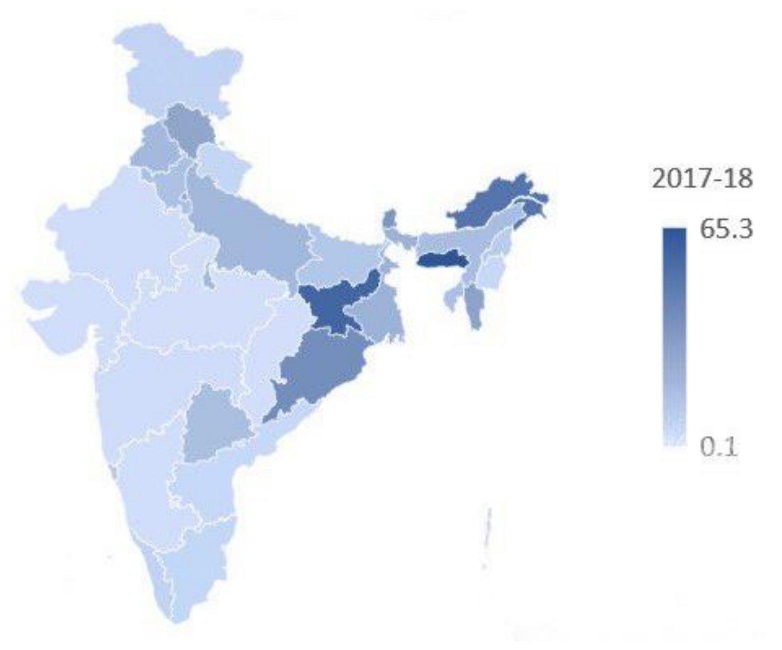
2.4.2 Prevalence of contract teacher recruitment in India and Odisha

According to UDISE+ data, approximately 12.7% of all teachers in India are contract teachers (UDISE+, 2022). In 2017-18, Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh had more than 50% of their teachers on contract; Odisha and Sikkim had more than 35%, and Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and West Bengal had more than 20% contract teachers (Ramachandran et al., 2020). Most contract teachers are recruited by the eastern and north-eastern states of India (Figure 2.3).

There has been a decrease in the proportion of contract teachers in Odisha from 39.6% in 2015-16 to 17.36% in 2021-22 (Figure2.4). The reason for this is primarily because there has been no large-scale recruitment in recent years, and contract teachers who were recruited in the past have been regularised.

Figure 2.3

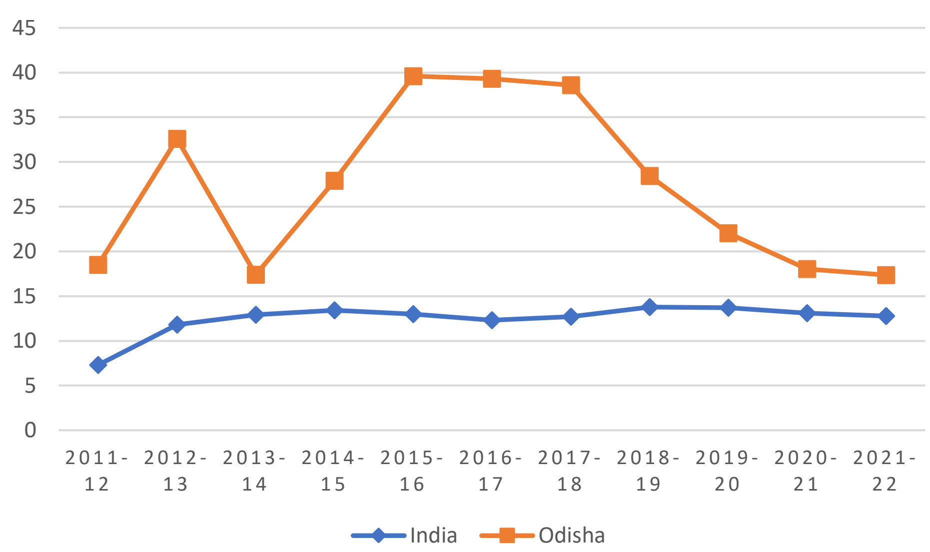
Heatmap of percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in India



(Based on Ramachandran *et al.*, 2020)

Figure 2.4

Percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in Odisha



(Based on Ramachandran et al., 2020 and UDISE+, 2022)

In 2017-18, 74% of schools in Odisha had at least one contract teacher (Ramachandran et al., 2020). Most contract teachers work in elementary schools (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3

Number and percentage of contract teachers to total teachers in government schools in India and Odisha

	India			Odisha						
	Total teachers in govt. schools	Total contract teachers in govt. schools	%	Total teachers in govt. schools	Total contract teachers in govt. schools	%	Total teachers in govt. elementary schools	Total contract teachers in govt. elementary schools	%	% of contract teachers in elementary schools
2017-18	2446200	345760	14.1	100759	39875	39.5	71928	29559	41.1	74.1
2018-19	2477836	341282	13.7	102850	29247	28.4	72956	20337	27.8	69.5
2019-20	2498495	342569	13.7	106608	23495	22.0	73845	15563	21.0	66.2
2020-21	2507844	328337	13.0	105117	18947	18.0	72321	12876	17.8	68.0
2021-22	2507963	320497	12.7	99496	17273	17.3	65859	10120	15.3	58.6

Elementary school refers to schools having classes 1-5/1-8/6-8 (compiled from UDISE+, 2022)

2.4.3 The effectiveness of contract teacher recruitment policy

In most studies conducted on contract teachers, the purpose has been to determine whether contract teachers have better effect on student learning outcomes. Based on a review of the most rigorous studies on this topic, Kingdon et al. (2013) conclude that contract teachers are "generally more effective in improving student outcomes than regular teachers" (p. 3). For example, Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2013) estimated that students in schools with an extra contract teacher performed better than those in comparison schools by 0.16 and 0.15 standard deviations, in math and language tests respectively. The results of similar studies (Atherton & Kingdon, 2010; Kingdon & Sipahimalani-Rao, 2010; Goyal & Pandey, 2013; Duflo et al., 2015) also indicate that contract teachers are less likely to be absent and spend more time in classrooms than regular teachers. Absenteeism is lower among students too when taught by contract teachers. Since all these positive outcomes are achieved at a fraction of the

cost of regular teachers, recruiting contract teachers is professed as a cost-effective policy solution.

A better understanding of the above-mentioned research agenda can be gained from the words of Steiner-Khamsi (2012).

> In teacher policy research, for example, the World Bank is enamoured with impact evaluations that show that underpaid contract teachers produce better student outcomes than regular teachers who are not accountable, do not fear losing their jobs, and therefore either do not show up regularly in school, or if they show up, do not teach, or if they teach, do not teach effectively. This complex causal chain of explanations is often simplified and reduced in the end to two variables only: low payment of teachers and job insecurity—both, according to the economists cited in World Bank publications, considered highly desirable for education systems that attempt to improve teacher effectiveness. (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 11)

It is not that studies have not reported the negative implications of recruiting contract teachers. Kingdon et al.'s (2013) review includes studies that report instances where regular teachers either outperform contract teachers or there is no significant difference between the two cadres. Similarly, absenteeism among contract teachers has been found to be as high as that among regular teachers (Kremer et al., 2005). While contract teachers may perform better in their first year of employment, their performance may decline in the second year of employment (Goyal & Pandey, 2013). In addition to these studies, scholars have argued for a long time that the low salary, coupled with the contractual nature of the job, is the main contributor to dissatisfaction and lack of motivation among contract teachers and thus, the policy is at best a stopgap measure (Kaushik et al., 2009; Chudgar et al., 2014; Chandra, 2015).

It is difficult to answer whether the lack of job security and poor compensation of contract teachers make them more effective since there are a variety of opinions on this subject. However, contractual employment may contribute to precarity in teachers' lives. In the following section, we discuss the concept of precarity and its relevance to the current thesis.

2.4.4 Contractual employment and precarity

Bourdieu (1963) is credited with the term précarité (Alberti et al., 2018). In his research in Algeria, he used it to distinguish between casual workers and permanent workers. With the worsening of working conditions over the last few decades, the term "precarity" has become increasingly prevalent. Scholars have had difficulty defining precarious work as the concept has been used for a variety of purposes, including describing employment structures, describing subjective feelings of insecurity among workers, and even referring to a lack of workers' engagement in labour politics (Alberti et al., 2018). There are four major factors that in certain combinations can lead to different degrees of precarity for individuals (Jonsson & Nyberg, 2010, as cited in McKay, et al., 2012, p. 83). The first factor is job insecurity, which depends on the duration of the contract and the uncertainty surrounding the renewal of the contract. The second factor is low pay. This refers to a situation in which a person's earnings are below the minimum or average wage, and there is not much opportunity for further increase. Third, subordinate employment which means exclusion from full social and welfare rights as well as employment protection. The final contributing factor is the lack of rights to representation. In this situation, workers lack the ability to engage in collective bargaining and have difficulty exercising their legal rights.

Thus, those who are employed on a contract basis are subject to precarious circumstances, especially when their salaries are low. Casualisation and contractualisation of teaching jobs are not limited to developing countries. Governments in North America, Europe and Australia are also hiring teachers on a fixed-term basis in an effort to stimulate flexibility (Koning, 2013). Based on their study of Australia's fixed-term contract teachers, Stacey et al. (2021) report that the workload of contract teachers is similar to that of permanent teachers. However, the main difference between both groups lies in how they experience their work. Contract teachers work

harder as they feel compelled to prove themselves. As their employment is at the mercy of the principals, they become increasingly silent in school matters and say ‘yes’ to everything. They feel ‘surveilled’, ‘marginalised’ and ‘othered’ in the schools. Outside, they have difficulty obtaining bank loans and finding adequate accommodations. Such findings led the authors to argue that experience of precariousness may have ‘scarring’ effects on contract teachers.

Additionally, precarious employment delays the transition of young people into adulthood (Cuervo & Chesters, 2019). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), an individual has not transitioned until he or she has been placed in a position that meets the basic criteria of “decency,” which is a permanency that provides a sense of security for the worker (Cuervo & Chesters, 2019). The achievement of economic independence has therefore been equated with achieving a successful transition into adulthood. Before making other significant life commitments, such as marriage, parental responsibilities, and home ownership, most young people prefer to obtain a permanent and full-time job. A precarious employment situation not only delays the attainment of milestones of adulthood but also makes it difficult to plan for the future.

Contractual appointment of teachers is likely to be a form of precarious employment, which can adversely impact their personal and professional lives. One of the aims of this thesis is to examine whether and how contract teachers experience uncertainty and insecurity in their lives during their contract period, as well as how they navigate through it. Is it reasonable to attribute the effectiveness of contract teachers to insecure employment and inadequate compensation?

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature on the lives of teachers and early career teachers. The number of studies on these topics in western countries is extensive, but only a

few could be included in this review. However, studies from India are limited and somewhat dated. A critical tone is also evident in most of the studies on Indian teachers included in this review, which may leave us with a negative impression of the teachers as a community. The studies do not draw our attention to teachers who work diligently and receive praise from colleagues and the communities they serve. The RTE Act has been in force for more than a decade and it is reasonable to expect that teaching and education have undergone significant changes over the past decade. In addition to the lack of recent studies, studies on teachers' lives are also lacking in the literature on teachers in India. This lack of research limits our understanding of teachers in the Indian context.

However, studies conducted abroad on teachers' lives present several lines of inquiry that can be transferred to the Indian context. Possible avenues of investigation would be to examine the commitment, self-efficacy beliefs, and identity formation of Indian teachers. It is pertinent to inquire: Why are teachers' beliefs and attitudes so resistant to change? What are their career aspirations? What strategies do they employ to deal with public criticism of their work? Do female teachers and teachers from disadvantaged backgrounds have particular concerns that affect their work and commitment differently than the concerns of male, middle class teachers? How do teachers interpret rules and policies while implementing them? Furthermore, little is known about how teachers balance their professional and personal lives, how they resolve work-related frustrations, and whether they remain committed to teaching as they progress through their careers. In short, their own perspectives or their "voices" have a sporadic presence in educational research. The international studies reviewed in this chapter highlight the importance of paying close attention to teachers' biographies.

By focusing on the biographies of Indian teachers, the study addresses a critical research gap in Indian education. Taking a position at the intersection of the personal and professional lives

of teachers, the study seeks to explore how one influences the other. How do the early career teachers of Odisha, who are low paid and on contract, define their commitments and priorities? Do their jobs provide them with a sense of security and prosperity? In their role as teachers, do they feel confident and competent? What are their opinions regarding their students, parents, colleagues, education department officials, and policies and programmes? In light of these questions and the findings of the international studies on teachers reviewed here, the data needed for the study was determined. In the next chapter, the theoretical background of the study is presented, which served as the basis for analysing and interpreting the findings.

Chapter 3

Theoretical background

Two fundamental, yet opposing propositions lie at the core of sociology concerning how people conduct their lives in society. One faction stresses the influence of social structures on human lives, while the other emphasises the importance of personal agency. It must be noted that, despite their widespread use, structure and agency in social theory remain poorly defined, and no consensus exists on how they should be defined (Sewell, 1992; Hays, 1994; Archer, 2003). When debating the relative importance of structure versus agency, theorists tend to downplay either structural effects or individual efforts. Therefore, in theoretical models, human lives appear either over-structured, over-determining or too spontaneous and unstructured. This thesis aims to explore the life circumstances of early career contract teachers in Odisha. In essence, this involves examining the relationship between structure and agency in the context of teachers. We need to ask whether the participating teachers are the architects of their lives or merely passive subjects of structures that are predictable in their outcomes. In what ways do structures affect participants, and how do participants exercise their agency? For a deeper understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, I turn to the work of critical realist Margaret Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007). However, before that, it is essential to briefly introduce the fundamental tenets of critical realism, the metatheory underpinning Archer's work.

3.1 Critical realism

Based on Roy Bhaskar's works (1975, 1989), critical realism emerged as a reaction to existing research paradigms such as positivism and constructivism. Ontological realism, epistemic relativism, and judgemental rationality comprise the “holy trinity” of critical realism (Porpora, 2015, p. 67). Ontological realism refers to the acceptance of a common, objective reality

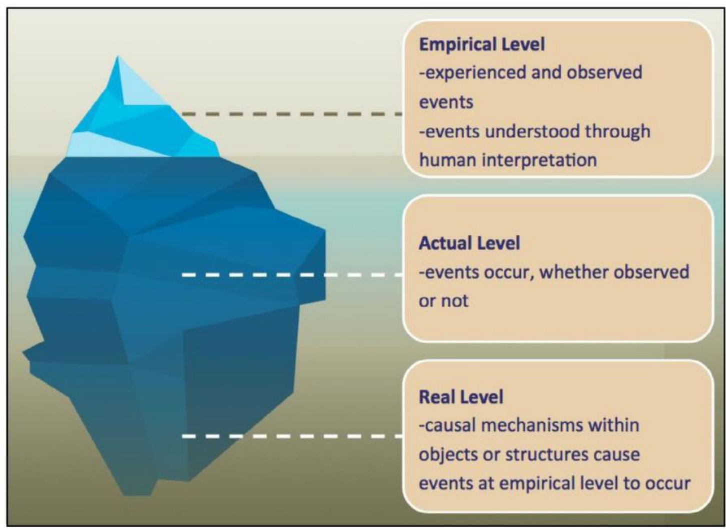
independent of human thought. In the social world, along with constructionism, critical realism agrees that much of the social world is a social construction or discursive. However, there are extra-discursive objects in the social world too. Epistemic relativism refers to the situatedness and theory-laden nature of our knowledge. Similar to constructionism, critical realism argues that what constitutes knowledge varies according to cultural context. Epistemic relativism, however, poses an impasse for constructionism. Critical realism moves one step further by asserting the human capacity for judgemental rationality, that is, the capacity for adjudication between competing constructions. Reality resists mistaken constructions. The limits of our socio-historical situatedness can be significantly transcended with better evidence and judgmental rationality.

While positivism concerns itself exclusively with the observable reality, critical realism postulates a stratified view of reality consisting of three domains: the empirical, the actual and the real (Figure 3.1). The domain of real consists of enduring structures and mechanisms. In the actual domain, events occur, but we may or may not observe them. It is only at the empirical level that we observe and experience events. In order to understand what is observable, a researcher must refer to the causal structure and mechanisms that operate at a deeper level.

The basic theoretical building blocks of critical realism are objects or entities (Easton, 2010). Entities can be "human, social or material, complex or simple, structured or unstructured" (Easton, 2010, p. 120). The concept of entities is in contrast to the concept of variables that dominates most traditions of social research. Variables measure the change in a particular thing, but they cannot explain what caused the change. In order to facilitate a genuine explanation of change, critical realism emphasises: a) the structure of entities, b) their causal powers and liabilities, and c) their mechanisms (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1

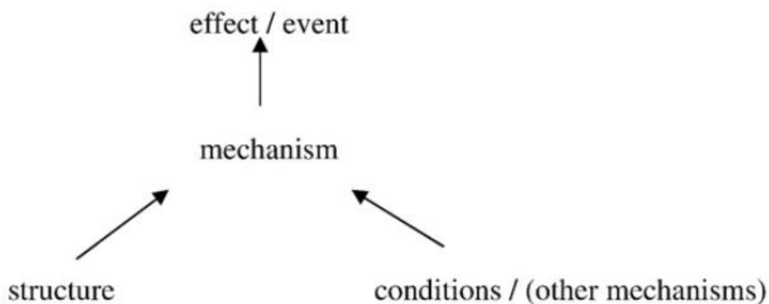
An iceberg metaphor for the stratified ontology of critical realism



(Fletcher, 2017, p. 183)

Figure 3.2

Critical realist view of causation



(Sayer, 2000, p. 15.)

In critical realist terms, the entity that is in focus in this research is the early career teacher with his/her own internal structures (knowledge, beliefs, personality traits, concerns etc.). The teacher possesses causal powers (to facilitate learning among students) and liabilities (to become frustrated with workplace policies or exhausted with workloads). Under a specific condition, namely contractual employment, this study examines how teachers are affected and what mechanisms generate this effect.

3.2 Archer's social realism

Archer's theoretical enterprise is very detailed, systematic, and expansive. Archer is equally diligent in demonstrating the weaknesses of existing views as she is in presenting her own. Her theory, also known as the morphogenetic approach, outlines how society transforms as a result of the interaction between structure, culture, and agency. However, the analysis of empirical data in this thesis is informed by her analytical account of what it means to be a human being and how humans navigate the world.

Archer charges prior sociological theorisation on structure and agency with "conflationism" (Archer, 2005). Conflation can be understood as "one-dimensional theorising" (Archer, 1995, p. 6) or a form of reductionism. There are many different labels and nuances associated with the debate (individual/society, structure/agency, micro/macro, holism/individualism, voluntarism/determinism, etc.), but conflationism has been the most common method of addressing the issue. Comte and Durkheim considered society to be an irreducible totality, a reality sui generis. This, therefore, meant that all 'social facts' were to be explained in terms of one another, without any reference to people's thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. In fact, Durkheim viewed people as "indeterminate material" and attributed personal characteristics to collectives (Archer, 1995, p. 38). The concept of collective conscience is one example of this (Durkheim, 1912). Conversely, proponents of individualism argued that social explanations must be framed in terms of individuals. J.S. Mill (1884) wrote, "Men in a state of society are still men. ... Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance with different properties, as hydrogen and oxygen are different from water" (as cited in Archer, 1995, pp. 3–4). According to Weber, a collective entity such as a company is essentially an organised aggregate of individual actions. As a result, he proposed the Verstehen method, which emphasises understanding motivations and the context within which human action takes place (Weber, 1904).

Archer (1995) terms the collectivists' rendering of the relationship between structure and agency as "downwards conflation" (p. 3). People are regarded as passive and dance to the tune of society. The individualist account is referred to by her as "upwards conflation" (Archer, 1995, p. 4). In this case, structure is considered passive, and the causal power lies with people. According to Archer, people and society or agency and structure are two different kinds of entities with unique powers and properties. Therefore, both must remain distinct and irreducible. It is the task of theory to examine the interplay between these two strata of reality. There is a third type of conflationism, called central conflation, which is best exemplified by Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Central conflationists seek to transcend the duality between structure and agency by rendering them mutually constitutive. In structuration theory, structure is both the medium and the outcome of action. Although structuration theory is not a reductionist theory like collectivism or individualism, it has another flaw - it does not explain how structure and agency influence each other or how this interplay contributes to social stability and change (Archer, 1995).

For Archer, the human capacity for reflexivity plays a vital role in explaining the influence of structure on agency (Archer, 2003). She defines reflexivity as "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa" (Archer, 2007, p. 4). Reflexivity is exercised through "internal conversation". In Archer's view, reflexivity is the most important of all human powers since it has causal efficacy, not only for humans but also for society and the relationship between them. "Reflexivity is the means by which we make our way through the world" (Archer, 2007, p. 5). It is our ability to exercise the power of reflexivity that determines whether we are active or passive agents. In contrast to "passive agents" who are merely subject to what happens to them, "active agents" are individuals who are capable of exercising some control over their lives (Archer, 2007, p. 6).

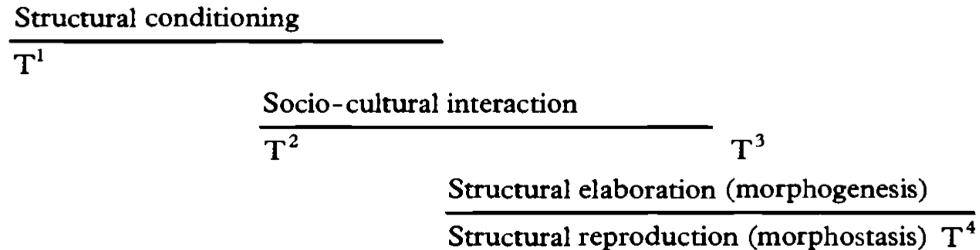
3.3 Against transcendence, for emergence: the morphogenetic/morphostatic framework

In critical realist literature, the concept of emergence frequently appears. Simply put, emergence is the process by which a whole acquires properties or powers that its parts do not possess (Elder-Vass, 2005). The new causal power or property that appears through emergence is called emergent property. For example, the ability to tell time is a new causal property of the entire clock as a whole and not a property of its components. The ability of water to extinguish a fire is also an emergent property. In the social world, Archer (1995) posits there are structural emergent properties (SEPs), cultural emergent properties (CEPs) and people's emergent properties (PEPs). Structural and cultural emergent properties are different from people's emergent properties. Thus, we have two sets of causal powers. Social forms (structure and culture) are characterised by temporal priority, relative autonomy, and causal efficacy. Human beings, on the other hand, have reflexivity, intentionality, emotionality and so on. Rather than transcending the agency-structure divide, the task is to investigate how different emergent properties interact at various levels. Archer's morphogenetic approach describes the interaction between these two sets of causal powers as well as the outcomes that ensue.

Morphogenetic analysis of any event begins by establishing a sequence of three phases (Figure 3.3). There are already structural conditions present in the first phase (T1-T2). During the second phase (T2-T3), which partly overlaps with the first phase, agents interact with pre-existing socio-cultural conditions. During the last phase (T3-T4), which partly overlaps with the second phase, the outcomes of this interaction are evident. The outcome can either be structural elaboration or structural reproduction. Currently existing social structures are a result of past interactions; current interactions will shape the structure for future agents, and the cycle will continue. Similar analysis can be conducted with respect to cultural elaboration or reproduction and group (agency) elaboration or reproduction.

Figure 3.3

The basic morphogenetic/morphostatic sequence

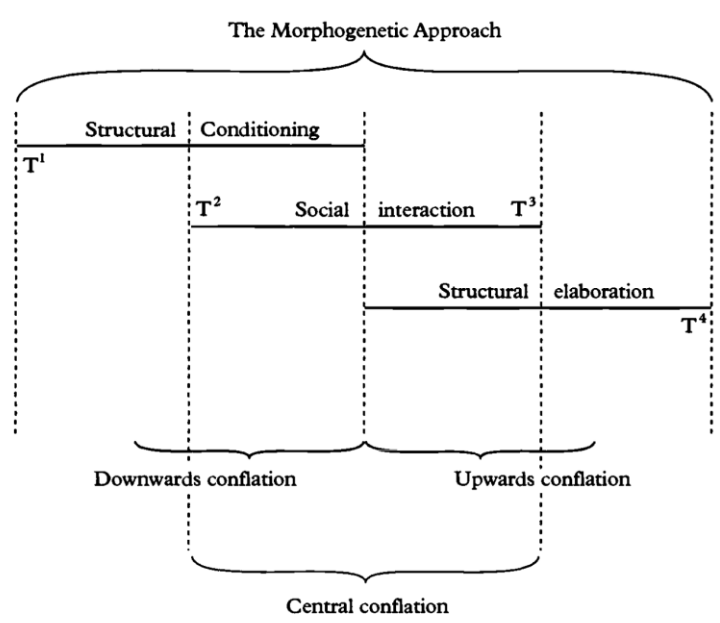


(Archer, 1995, p. 157)

The conflationary theories fail to account for the whole sequence because they consider only a part of the process (Figure 3.4). In downward conflation, only structural conditioning is taken into account. The upwards conflationary theories ignore the first phase in favour of focusing on how agential action leads to social change. According to central conflationists, structure does not pre-exist. The focus of their attention is, therefore, limited to how structure is instantiated through agential interaction and practice.

Figure 3.4

Time span under consideration in conflationary theories versus morphogenetic approach



(Archer, 1995, p. 82)

The question remains, what does 'conditioning' entail? One answer to this question is that social forms can shape the social contexts in which people find themselves. However, people do not respond to social forms in identical ways. Understanding the variability of agentic responses requires an understanding of human nature and people's emergent properties.

3.4 A humanist and stratified model of 'people'

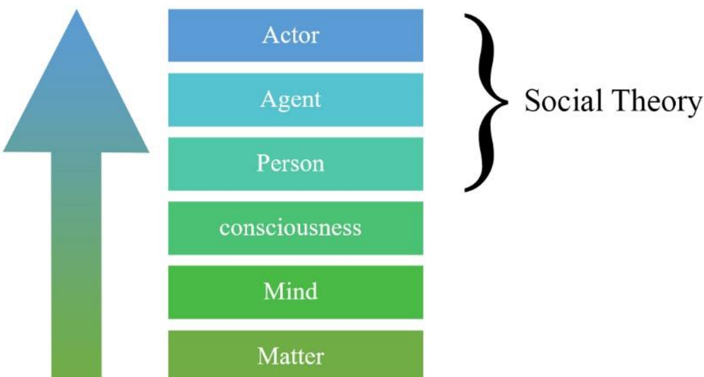
Porpora (2015) writes, “In much contemporary theory, human agency becomes de-agentified. In much contemporary sociological theory, what used to be human agents now shamble along, unmotivated, hypnotised by habit” (p. 130). He further argues that this tendency of sociology represents a departure from common sense, whereas the critical realist understanding of human beings is more in line with common sense (Porpora, 2015). “Modernity's Man”, for instance, who emerged from the Enlightenment tradition, is stripped of all powers and properties except rationality (Archer, 2000, pp. 51–85). “The lone, atomistic and opportunistic bargain-hunter … who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing” is arguably an impoverished model (Archer, 2000, p. 4). Similarly, “Society's Being”, the contribution of social constructionists to the debate, is presented as a gift of society, a cultural artefact (Archer, 2000, pp. 86–117). Contract teacher hiring policies are based on such an impoverished model of human being. The neoliberal ethos imagines teachers as “one-dimensional economic beings” (Attick, 2017, p. 38). The assumption is that a rational person would prefer to become a low-paid, contract teacher rather than remain unemployed. She would feel compelled to work hard in order to avoid losing her job. It appears that the success of contract teacher hiring policies rests upon just one property of human nature, namely rationality, as if everything else is irrelevant. In order to counter such propositions, we need a robust theory of human nature, such as that of Archer's.

Archer (2000) presents a stratified model of human beings where each stratum has emergent properties unique to it (Figure 3.5). Biological and chemical materials are the building blocks

of human beings at the most fundamental level. From matter emerges mind and mind provides the ground for the emergence of consciousness. Consciousness allows humans to have a continuous sense of self. It is the self that leads to the emergence of the person, the agent, and the actor. Person, agent, and actor are the only strata considered in social theory. The need for this stratified view arises from the fact that people have different powers, interests, and reasons as human beings, as agents and as actors. Depending on the question we are trying to answer, we can focus on the properties specific to a particular stratum.

Figure 3.5

Emergence in human beings



Our sense of self is prior and primitive to our sociality (Archer, 2000). Developing a sense of self is similar to learning a theory early in life. A human being is incapable of any practical action unless she learns to draw a line between herself and the world. The emergence of the self-conscious 'I' is not dependent on language, as the interaction of a child with the practical world provides enough guidance. The self-conscious person, the ‘I’ gradually learns about the ‘me’, the agent. Archer (1995) defines agents as “collectivities sharing the same life chances” (p. 256). Agents are viewed as agents of “the socio-cultural system into which they are born” and of “the systemic features they transform” (Archer 1995, p. 257). Reflectively, the 'I' discovers a great deal about the 'Me'. This is me: I am male, I am Indian, I am wealthy, I am a Dalit, and so on. As early as childhood, the person begins to recognise how structure has

positioned her as an agent and what it entails. In reflection, she asks, "Why can't I have a bicycle or more food?"

Archer posits that human beings ineluctably engage in three orders of reality: natural, practical and social (Archer, 2000). As the 'I' discovers that there are 'dangerous' and 'pleasant' objects in the world, she also discovers that she possesses 'desirable' and 'undesirable' characteristics. However, whereas the 'dangerous' can be avoided, the 'undesirable' must be accepted. Being an agent merely implies occupying a position in society's distribution of resources. Thus, everyone is necessarily an agent. The term agent, in Archer's theory, denotes a collective or group, so it is always used in the plural. Its powers include “capacities for articulating shared interests, organising for collective action, generating social movements and exercising corporate influence in decision-making” (Archer, 1995, pp. 259–60). When agents organise and articulate their interests they can be termed corporate agents. Examples of corporate agents are “vested interest groups, promotive interest groups, social movements and defensive associations” (Archer, 1995, p. 258). Primary agents, on the other hand, do not have a voice in structural or cultural change. They do not organise themselves to articulate their interests. However, primary agents respond to social forms in the course of their daily lives, and their responses can have a significant aggregate impact on social forms.

Everyone acts as an agent at some point, but many of our actions have little to do with being an agent. To understand such actions, we need to consider human beings as actors. Actors are basically role incumbents. “It is as Actors that we acquire, or may acquire, a strict social identity by investing ourselves in a role and personifying it in a particularistic way” (Archer, 1995, p. 256). How do we become actors? The position of agents in terms of power, property, and privilege has a considerable bearing on their perceptions of what is possible, desirable, and attainable. Life chances refer to the fact that different groups of people have differential access to different roles. Thus, agency accounts for who occupies which role. Agency also affects how

actors personify their roles. “If Persons furnish activity-potential for Actors, then Agency is a necessary mediator between them in order to supply activity with a purpose” (Archer, 1995, p. 256).

3.5 Constraints and enablements

People encounter social forms (structure and culture) as constraints and enablements. However, “there are no constraints and enablements per se, that is as entities” (Archer, 2003, p. 5). Structural forms, such as roles, distributions, organisations, and institutions, and cultural forms such as myths, discourses, ideologies, tastes, prejudices, theories, and doctrines exist as causal powers. They become constraints and enablements only when they impede or facilitate a specific agential enterprise or a “project” (Archer, 2003, p. 6). A project involves a desirable end and a plan of action for achieving that end. Projects can be individual or collective. If no agent envisages any project and entertains any course of action, the structural and cultural forms will remain as unexercised powers.

Reflexive deliberation is not a cost-benefit analysis, but an emotionally charged process. It can involve creativity and anticipation. In relation to constraints and enablements, agential responses can vary greatly: from evasion, through compliance, to strategic manipulation or subversion (Archer, 2007). Occasionally, agents may anticipate obstacles to certain projects or the ease of advancing certain projects. As a result, they may feel encouraged or discouraged to pursue a particular project. Agents can act strategically when a project is constrained during execution to discover ways to overcome it or to identify the second-best solution. When circumstances are favourable for a project, agents may adopt even more ambitious goals.

Due to human reflexivity, the influences of constraints and enablements can never be deterministic.

> The precise outcome varies with subjects’ personal concerns, degrees of commitment and with the costs different agents will pay to see their projects through in the face of structural

> hindrances. Equally, they vary with subjects' readiness to avail themselves of enablements. (Archer, 2007, p. 12)

In the following subsections, we discuss some of the ways in which constraints and enablements appear.

3.5.1 Involuntaristic placement

As Archer (1995) contends, "structure necessarily pre-dates the action(s) which transform it" and thus, situations are objectively defined and shaped (p. 157). Past actions are deposited in the form of current situations: the distribution of resources (material and cultural), the existing role array, the institutional configuration and so on. Structure has a continuous and all-pervasive influence. "There is no 'isolated' micro world - no *lebsenswelt* 'insulated' from the socio-cultural system" (Archer, 1995, p. 10). Alternatively, as Bhaskar (1989) puts it, "the games of the life-world (Lebenswelt) are always initiated, conditioned and closed outside the life-world itself" (as cited in Archer, 1995, p. 157). Human beings find themselves placed involuntarily amid an array of already existing structural and cultural causal powers. Although the involuntaristic impingement of structures is objective in nature, as will be discussed later, people may not necessarily recognise what they are and the reception of structural powers is also subjective.

3.5.2 Vested interests

An interest can be regarded as vested if it is anchored to a particular position. Due to involuntaristic placement in different socio-cultural situations, people find themselves with vested interests which are both "systemic and enduring" (Archer, 1995, p. 203). Vested interests predispose people to "different courses of action and even towards different life courses" (Archer, 1995, p. 203). In order to be moved by a vested interest, however, the agent should find it satisfactory under her own description (Archer, 2003). The son of a rich man must see it worthwhile to manage and expand his family's business empire. However, not

everyone acts in accordance with their vested interests andfailing to do so may result in suffering.

3.5.3 Opportunity costs

An agent's interpretation of any situation cannot be fully determined in advance. A given situation may be deemed rewarding or frustrating depending on its cultural and structural characteristics. However, different objective opportunity costs are associated with different agential responses (Archer, 1995). Opportunity costs exert their influence in many ways. The same course of action (such as pursuing higher education or buying a home) may have different costs for agents positioned in different circumstances. Different opportunity costs do not only affect how easy or difficult it may be to pursue the same course of action for groups that are differently situated, but also condition which projects they are willing to pursue. Occasionally, there may be compelling reasons to act against vested interests or commitments that outweigh the opportunity costs. Agential response is never routine or habitual.

3.5.4 Degrees of interpretative freedom

It is always possible to interpret situations and decide the preferred course of action in a variety of ways. Even the most stringent constraints do not "determine" the actions of an agent (Archer, 1995, p. 210). We encounter structural conditioning not as hydraulic forces, but rather as reasons. There may be multiple structural and cultural elements at play in a given situation that are not in sync or aligned. In such cases, one may have competing material and ideological interests or reasons for action. The ability to weigh reasons is one of the most unique abilities of human beings.

The terms constraints and enablements only describe the ease or difficulty of completing specific projects. They do not tell anything about which projects are considered. Thus, to understand the full process of how structure conditions agency, we need to pay equal attention

to agents too. Agents generally proceed in three steps: they diagnose their situations, identify their interests and design projects for achieving their objectives. “At all three points they are fallible: they can mis-diagnose their situations, mis-identify their interests, and mis-judge appropriate courses of action” (Archer, 2003, p. 9).

3.6 Concerns, projects, and practices

Human beings exercise the power of reflexivity primarily through internal conversation. Talking to ourselves in our heads allows us to reflect on what is most important to us, our commitments, our concerns. As mentioned before, human beings, due to their constitution and the nature of the world, are bound to engage in three orders of reality: natural, practical, and social. These three domains are also sources of three kinds of concerns: physical wellbeing, performative competence, and self-worth. “Our physical well-being depends upon establishing successful practices in the natural world; our performative competence relies upon acquiring skilful practices in relation to material artefacts; and our self-worth hinges upon developing rewarding practices in society” (Archer, 2007, p. 8). Concerns related to these three orders cannot be ignored without consequence. We can, however, prioritise our concerns.

Emotions, defined as “commentaries upon our concerns” play an influential role in how we assess our various concerns (Archer, 2000, p. 95). For example, physical pain is an inherent part of training to become an athlete. Physical wellbeing cannot be ignored, but performative competency has an equally important impact on overall wellbeing. The first order emotional commentary, in this case, would be, ‘this is so painful, I should take a break’. However, due to reflexivity, one may arrive at second order emotional commentary: no pain, no gain. It is not inevitable that everyone will achieve second order emotionality: some may remain confined to the first order, at least for a long period of time. People keep “drifting from job to job, place to place and relationship to relationship” (Archer, 2000, pp. 246–247). Second order emotionality cannot be attained immediately, nor must it necessarily be sustained.

Basically, we evaluate our commitments against our emotional commentaries. Emotions provide us with interests and purposes in the world. In reviewing any project that contributes to shaping our lives, such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle, acquiring new skills, getting married, raising children, or writing books, we ask ourselves, "Do I care enough about this project to live with it?" (Archer, 2000, p. 232).

Unlike the Modernity's man, limited by instrumental rationality, human beings can have "ultimate concerns" (Archer, 2000, p. 4). Our ultimate concerns are not merely a means to an end, but represent our identity and are constitutive of who we are. Through internal conversation we elaborate our constellation of concerns and define our ultimate concerns. Over time, we develop a strict personal identity as: "the being-with-this-constellation-of-concerns" (Archer, 2007, p. 87). "We are who we are because of what we care about: in delineating our ultimate concerns and accommodating our subordinate ones, we also define ourselves. We give a shape to our lives" (Archer, 2000, p. 10).

We design projects in order to realise our concerns. It is impossible for us to live without projects. Projects then translate into practices. Every person strives to establish a modus vivendi, or a way of life. Establishing a modus vivendi means devising a set of practices oriented toward realising the ineluctable concerns while giving priority to concerns that are personally meaningful.

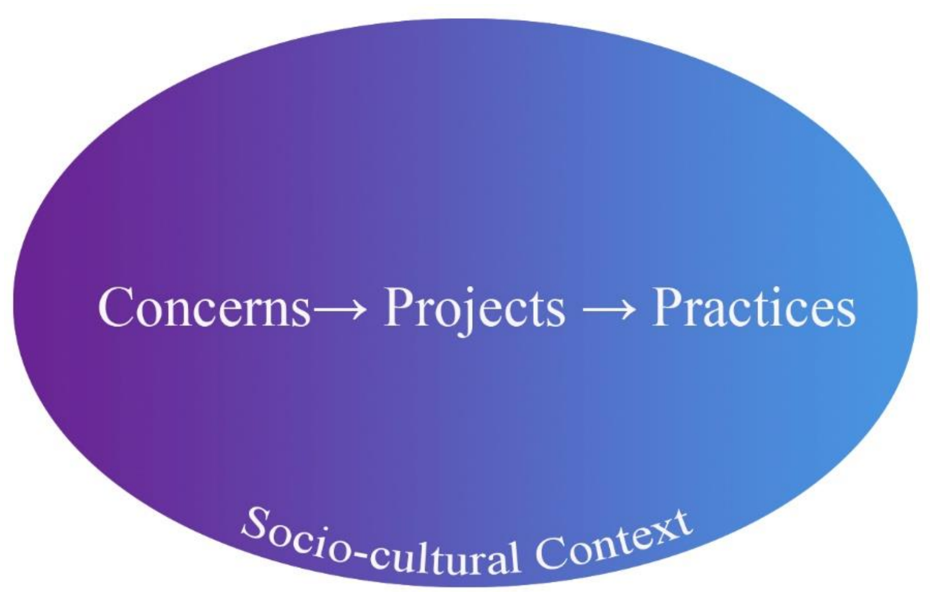
> This *modus vivendi* can prioritise one of the three orders of reality, as with someone who is said to 'live for their art', but what it cannot do is entirely to neglect the other orders. Thus it is significant that enclosed congregations of religious, who are said 'to have renounced the world', all had Constitutions which minutely proscribed bodily relations (food, sleep, clothing, bathing, walking, custody of the eyes etc.) and closely regulated social relations (recreation, friendships, family contact, visiting etc.). Most of us have to work it out for ourselves, and the difficulties we experience probably account for public curiosity about how prominent personalities have done it – how long does the Prime Minister sleep, how hard does the Princess work-out, or even how does the President care for his dog? (Archer, 2000, p. 221)

One may, however, fail to establish a successful cluster of practices for a variety of reasons. As society is an open system, the intervention of contingencies can ruin even the most carefully conceived plans. People are fallible creatures and may make mistakes while deliberating a project, resulting in a flawed design. As the project progresses into the practice phase, it may become apparent that it is not producing the level of satisfaction that was expected while it was being designed. Additionally, one may find that maintaining a commitment is getting more challenging than expected. There may be times when it becomes evident that it is simply not possible to severely subordinate certain concerns in order to realise another concern. In addition, as mentioned before, circumventing constraints, or rejecting enablements may come at a much higher cost than originally anticipated.

The purpose of the discussion above was to point out that, to understand how structure conditions agency and how agency responds to structure, we must take into account agentic enterprises or projects. And we cannot fully appreciate any project without understanding reflexive deliberations about personal concerns (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6

Establishing a modus vivendi in a particular socio-cultural context



3.7 Acquiring a social identity

Personal identities are formed by unique patterns of concerns. Everyone has a personal identity, but each does not have a social identity (Archer, 1995). Social identity can be acquired by occupying a social role or in other words, by becoming a social actor. While personal identities are forged in all three orders of reality, social identities are related to the social order only. Thus, social identity is a subset of the much-extensive personal identity. However, there is a dialectical relationship between personal identity and social identity. The relationship can be disentangled through the following three moments.

3.7.1 PI → SI

In the first moment, "nascent personal identity holds sway over nascent social identity (PI → SI)" (Archer, 2000, p. 289). How do young people make their first career decisions? All adolescent agents have access to certain information and opportunities regarding social roles. They also have direct experience of the three orders of reality: natural, practical, and social. In addition, they have observed people engaging in these orders of reality. The experiences they have had in the natural world through play, sport, travel, and outdoor activities inform how they wish to place themselves in the natural world, whether they wish to work outdoors or indoors, in an urban or rural setting, etc. In the same way, they discover through interactions within the practical order what kind of activities they enjoy or are proficient at. They are also engaged involuntarily in a number of roles, including that of a student, a sibling, a friend, etc. Through reflexive deliberation, they become aware of which of these roles is most important to their sense of self-worth. Observing people in different roles, they assess whether a particular lifestyle should be replicated or not. "Or, more searchingly, they interrogate themselves about which aspects of a role are worth having and which they would want to be different for themselves" (Archer, 2000, p. 290). Although experiences gained in the three orders of reality

are often insufficient for making occupational decisions, they are nonetheless influential on young people's concerns and motivate them to assume social roles.

3.7.2 SI → PI

In the second moment, “nascent social identity impacts upon nascent personal identity (SI → PI)” (Archer, 2000, p. 291). Without experiencing a particular job, it is impossible to accurately estimate what that job is like. In any job there can be unexpected satisfactions and dissatisfactions. New employees evaluate the positives and negatives of the role and come up with a positive balance before they can invest themselves in it. Most employers present a bright prospect in which tomorrow's bonus will more than compensate for today's disadvantages. In the course of assuming a new position, a new employee undergoes certain subjective and objective changes.

> Subjectively, they have acquired some new self-knowledge which will impact upon their personal identity: they are now people who know that they are bored by x, disillusioned by y and uneasy with z. Yet objectively they have changed too, because the opportunity costs have altered for their revised ‘second choice’. They are now older, lack a clean sheet, may lack decent references, and can have a wasted and possibly inappropriate training. Corrected positions may be harder to come by, or the applicant may have to settle for them at a lower level, which may carry its own quota of discontents. (Archer, 2000, p. 292)

When a role does not become a major source of self-worth, one must come up with a modus vivendi that is satisfyingly liveable without the social identity aspired to initially. This can be achieved by promoting non-social concerns, such as a life centered around some skilled activity (for example, creative writing) or by radically redefining what constitutes an ideal social role (engaging in voluntary work). The absence of these remedies puts personal identity itself at risk, and the process of 'drift' sets in.

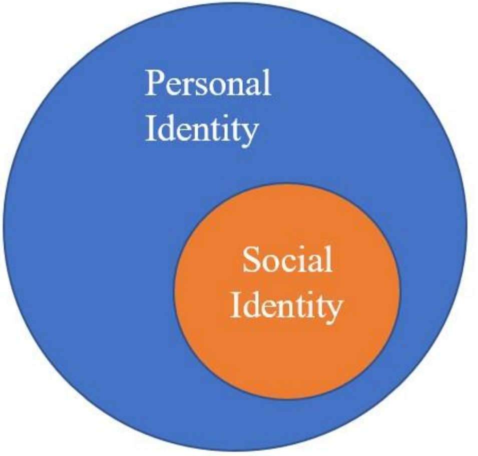
3.7.3 PI ↔ SI

The third moment is characterised by "the synthesis between personal and social identity (PI ↔ SI)" (Archer, 2000, p. 293). Once a satisfying role has been found (either in the first or subsequent attempts), the question arises, "how much of myself am I willing to invest in it?" Social roles demand time, energy, and commitment, and at this moment, self-worth has become a function of a particular role. In addition, a person may be juggling multiple roles that are equally demanding (for example, being a teacher and a mother). This necessitates striking a balance.

> The resultant is a personal identity *within which* the social identity has been assigned its place in the life of an individual. That place may be large ('she lives for her work') or small ('he's only in it for the money'), but there is nothing which automatically ensures that social concerns have top priority. It is the individual who prioritises, and even if conditions are constrainingly such that good reason is found for devoting many hours to, say, monotonous employment, nothing insists that subjects put their hearts into it. Plenty of people live for their time off from social role taking. (Archer, 2000, pp. 293–294, emphasis in original)

Figure 3.7

Social identity assigned its place within personal identity



Lastly, no social identity can be derived from a role without personification. Social actors are 'active role-makers rather than passive role-takers' (Archer, 1995, p. 280). People stop personifying their roles and become passive implementers of minimalistic expectations when

they are no longer able to express their personal identities through their social identities. Such situation may lead to a reordering of priorities.

3.8 Reformulating the research questions

In light of Archer's theory, the research questions of this study may be reformulated as follows:

- What are the concerns and ultimate concerns of early career teachers working in elementary schools of Odisha?
- Why did they decide to acquire social identities as contract teachers in government elementary schools?
- In what ways does the condition of contractual employment affect them?
- In what ways do their social identities and personal identities interact?
- What are the aspects of their work lives that they consider constraints or enablements to their performance?

The next chapter discusses the methodology used in order to investigate the above questions.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 "My world"

There is a well-known story in Hindu mythology about Ganesha and Kartikeya, two sons of Lord Shiva, who once engaged in a racing competition. The winner would be the one who circles around the world three times and is the first to return. As soon as the terms were announced, Kartikeya shot off without a second thought. In contrast, Ganesha requested his parents to sit together and then walked three times around them. For him, his parents were his world. Thus, he won the contest because he fulfilled the terms of the competition by encircling three times around "his world". A person's life is organised around the things that matter most to him or her. Each person has a unique and subjectively valuable "my world". The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the worlds of early career teachers who work on contract in Odisha's elementary schools. How should this investigation be conducted? Observing Ganesha walking around his parents repeatedly will not reveal why he is doing so. It is necessary to speak with him in order to understand his reasoning. In line with this logic, this study uses a qualitative approach to research and gathers data through in-depth semistructured interviews with teachers. According to Seidman (2006):

> The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses… At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (p. 9)

In the words of Rubin and Rubin (2012), “Qualitative interviews let us see that which is not ordinarily on view and examine that which is often looked at but seldom seen” (p. xv). Researchers sometimes underestimate qualitative research and dismiss it as "mere storytelling" or "useful at best as prologue to statistical studies", but in-depth interviewing has been proven

to be a valuable method because it is based on careful standards, built-in credibility checks, and yields insightful findings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. xv). By conducting an in-depth interview, one can explore a problem in its natural setting, investigate related and contradictory themes, and point out the subtle as well as the obvious.

In the following pages I describe the ontological and epistemological stand of this study, the approach I have chosen for data collection and analysis. Also, I describe my research design and identify its strengths and weaknesses. Following this, I introduce the research setting and discuss how the fieldwork was conducted. I then present how I analysed the data. This chapter concludes by identifying the ethical responsibilities and implications of this study.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological considerations

The methodology of this study is informed by the critical realist philosophical perspective. According to critical realist ontology, reality exists independent of our beliefs. Our knowledge of reality, however, is always theory-laden and framed from specific viewpoints. This is a constructivist or relativist epistemology. In line with social constructivism, critical realism holds that it is impossible for us to arrive at a purely "objective" account, or in Putnam's words, get a "God's eye view" of reality (Putnam, 1999 as cited in Maxwell, 2012, p. 5). However, constructivist ontology denies that any reality exists apart from what we construct.

Critical realism also considers mental entities (ideas, thoughts, meanings, beliefs, intentions etc.) to be as real as physical entities. However, mental phenomena are not as accessible to direct observation and description as physical entities. Maxwell (2012) states:

> In this, they are like quarks, black holes, the meteor impact that supposedly killed off the dinosaurs, or William Shakespeare: we have no way of directly observing them, and our claims about them are based on a variety of sorts of indirect evidence (including verbal behaviour). (p. 18)

Mental phenomena such as reasons, plans, motivations, and emotions can be considered causes or explanations of people's actions. In this regard, critical realism is in agreement with symbolic interactionists. Also, as parts of a single real world, physical and mental phenomena interact with each other. Accordingly, individuals are capable of causing changes in their physical environments, and their physical contexts have a causal impact on their beliefs and perspectives. In addition, critical realism is compatible with some of the premises of postmodernism, such as the idea that diversity is fundamental rather than superficial, and a scepticism toward general laws (Maxwell, 2012).

The use of a critical realist perspective has many implications for the design of research. For the present study, this perspective helps to orient the research design towards exploring the meanings and motivations of participants. It also allows the study to explore how participants are affected and affected by their actual situations. Furthermore, it highlights that there may be more significant differences than similarities among participants. Critical realism also makes this study a humble endeavour, since it accepts that any rendering of participants' "my worlds" will always be inadequate. Nevertheless, it is possible to enhance the credibility of research findings by identifying and addressing threats to validity at each stage of the research process.

4.3 Research approach

While interviews are perhaps the most used method of conducting social research, there is considerable disagreement in the methodology literature regarding how interviews should be designed and conducted. According to positivists, interviews should follow a uniform structure and include standard questions. An interviewer should maintain a neutral position while maintaining strict control over the interview. It is argued that, using this approach can result in unbiased and reproducible responses in interviews.

Interpretive approaches, on the other hand, emphasise the mutual construction of meanings within interviews as a means of gaining access to informants' subjective understandings. As a medium of research, critical realism also recognises the importance of meaning construction. Critical realism aligns well with the interpretive approach to interviewing. However, it also contends that social action is influenced by pre-existing social structures and relationships. Besides appreciating the interpretations of informants, critical realists seek to examine the social contexts, constraints, and resources that influence their actions (Smith & Elger, 2014). Although some scholars have attempted to develop a critical realist approach for the design, conduct, and analysis of interviews, a truly distinctive approach that can be utilised for a wide range of research objectives is yet to emerge (Smith & Elger, 2014). With respect to the use of the interview method in this study, books on biographical and narrative research were particularly influential (Elliott, 2005; Erben, 1998; I. Goodson et al., 2017; Harrison, 2008; Merrill & West, 2009).

The various approaches to qualitative research, such as biographical analysis, narrative analysis, life history, and autoethnography, share many similarities and differences. Merrill and West (2009) note:

> There can, for instance, be shared interest in the changing experiences and viewpoints of people in their daily lives, what they consider important, and how to make sense of what they say about their pasts, presents and futures, and the meanings they give to these in the stories they tell. There can be sensitivity towards the uniqueness yet also the similarities of lives and stories. (p. 2)

Biographical approach enables researchers to identify structuring themes in people’s lives (Jones & Rupp, 2000). By adopting this approach, we can identify patterns in the lives of several individuals, as well as distinguishing characteristics in each individual's life. According to Erben (1998), biographical research serves both general and specific purposes. The general purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of the lives

of individuals or groups of individuals and in doing so expand our knowledge of society at large. The specific purpose can be the analysis of a particular life or lives for some special reason. "[F]or example in examining the world of work it may be appropriate to look at the biographical routes by which given individuals become teachers, nurses, prostitutes, librarians, actors, etc." (Erben, 1998, p. 5). Biographical research can also be interventionist. It may seek to "give notice to those who may otherwise not be allowed to tell their story or who are denied a voice to speak" (Denzin, 1989 as cited in Clarke, 1998, p. 76).

Similar to the biographical approach, this thesis is also concerned with gaining a better understanding of the lives of early career teachers, especially the patterns in their lives and characteristics that make them unique. Besides telling their stories, this research seeks to make sense of the educational system in which their lives are embedded.

A narrative approach to research also holds similar promise. Narrative accounts of people's lives and experiences can provide valuable insight into their everyday lives and the meanings they place on their experiences. It is through narratives or stories that people to make sense of unexpected and unusual events. Bruner writes, "The function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern" (Bruner, 1990 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p. 9).

The purpose of narrative research, however, goes beyond simply telling tales about individuals' lives. "It aims to explore, analyse and interpret the gaps and silences, biases and exaggerations of the tellers of the tales" (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. xii). A study of narratives seeks to understand how they are constructed within particular discourse settings and cultural frameworks. "We are never the sole authors of our own narratives" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 5). Our interlocutors can always accept, reject, or improve our narratives. Furthermore, other people or institutions generate narratives on behalf of others without involving them in the

process. “[T]his is what power is about. Some people decide about other people’s jobs, their livelihoods, their identities. But even as puppets in a power game, people are still co-authors of history…” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 5). Moreover, narrative approach may contribute to redressing some of the power imbalances that exist in social science research (Elliott, 2005).

Drawing upon the narrative approach, this study examines how early career teachers interpret their experiences, both routine and unusual, and how their narratives relate to the narratives circulating about them. In order to accomplish this objective, this study sought to generate narrative data through in-depth interviews with teachers. Nevertheless, before discussing the research design, it is important to clarify what is meant by "narrative data".

To put it simply, a narrative can be defined as “a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected. Indeed, it is easy to say what is not a narrative even if it is a text: a table, a list, a schedule, a typology” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17). Narratives contain plots. Polkinghorne contends that plot is the basic means by which specific events are combined into a meaningful whole (Czarniawska, 2004). Essentially, a plot refers to "the passage from one equilibrium to another" (Todorov, 1971 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p. 19). Consider the following narrative supplied by Czarniawska (2004) as an example: “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up. The baby stopped crying” (p. 19). The plot of this simple narrative involves an intervening action that restores equilibrium. Czarniawska (2004) cites Bruner (1990) who stresses that the power of the narrative is determined more by the plot than by the truth or falsity of story elements. Narratives are open to interpretation because the same set of events can be arranged according to a variety of plot lines.

Biographical and narrative research both rely heavily on interviews. An interview provides an opportunity to observe how stories are created, to collect stories, and to provoke storytelling

(Czarniawska, 2004). There is no better occasion than an interview to elicit participants' "accounts". Ethnomethodology says people use accounts to describe or explain specific situations and justify their behaviour. There is no need for an account, however, when people engage in routine, common-sense behaviour. Being a 'staged situation,' a research interview provides an opportunity to suspend all assumptions (Czarniawska, 2004). Participants accept the researcher's positioning as uninformed and offer accounts for their actions. Furthermore, “every account is a manifestation of the underlying negotiation of identities” (Scott & Lyman, 1968 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p. 54)

Despite being influenced by biographical and narrative research, the approach taken in this study does not fully conform to either. Critics have argued that biographical research fails to pay sufficient attention to broader social issues and policy concerns.

> Some historians question the biographical turn as a sort of retreat into ‘fine, meaningless detail’, which obscures the big picture and important social policy questions (Fieldhouse, 1996: 119). Researchers get lost, in this view, in the detailed description of lives, even in a narcissistic way perhaps, without helping people understand how society works or how it can be changed for the better. (Merrill & West, 2009, p. 11)

In the narrative approach, narrative analysis often involves examining the form and structure of a narrative rather than its content. The interview itself becomes the subject of inquiry, rather than being used to answer research questions (Elliott, 2005).

The research questions of this study demand a focus on the content of participants' narratives. Therefore, I have adopted a “naturalist” approach while analysing data. Gubrium and Holstein “contrast the naturalist approach which ‘seeks rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their natural habitats’ with the constructivist or ethnomethodological approach which focuses on ‘how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction’” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997 as cited in Elliott, 2005, p. 18). According to Elliott (2005) the naturalist approach, with roots stretching back to the Chicago school, remains the mainstream approach

in qualitative research. With this approach researchers typically pose questions such as: "'what experiences have people had?', 'what is happening?', 'what are people doing?', 'what does it mean to them?'" (Elliott, 2005, p. 19). In this regard, interviews are valued as means of data collection, whereas narratives are valued for their content.

4.4 Research design

Readings on qualitative research and interview methods contributed greatly to my understanding of the appropriate design for this study. However, a pilot study conducted in mid-2018 played an important role in the process. It helped me decide which recommendations offered by books were practical and useful for my context and purpose and what modifications I should make. For example, several researchers recommend conducting two to three interviews with each participant (Elliott, 2005; I. F. Goodson & Gill, 2011; Seidman, 2006). This procedure benefits research in at least three ways: it allows for shorter interviews, while covering a greater range of topics; and it conveys to the participant that the researcher is really interested in their experiences, thereby fostering trust between them; it allows the researcher to verify that the responses are consistent in a separate interview and, therefore, enables the researcher to establish internal validity of the findings. This study employed a three-interview design, each planned for approximately one hour.

Although my review of literature on teachers and early career teachers provided me with ideas for developing an interview guide, the pilot study helped me identify additional topics to discuss with participants. I decided to collect some basic biographical information through a questionnaire before engaging in in-depth interviewing. In my pilot study, I felt that initiating in-depth interviews directly seemed abrupt and that participants were uneasy for a while, since none of them had ever participated in such research before. Surveys were familiar to them as a method of conducting research. The questionnaire served as both a means of easing the participants and a tool for judging their willingness to participate while they gradually opened

up their world to me. The questionnaire and interview guide used in this study are provided in Annexure 1.

The interview guide contained only a list of topics that would be discussed during the interview. The actual questions that were posed to the participants were formulated impromptu. The questions were framed "using everyday rather than sociological language" (Elliott, 2005, p. 29). The sequencing and wording of questions differed in each interview. In addition to the main questions, probing questions were also asked to elicit more information. Participants were encouraged to present narratives while discussing any topic. When posing questions, I did not try to be too clever and careful with my questions. Some of the questions were rather awkward, but as expected, this contributed to the organic nature of the conversation and resulted in some very interesting stories being shared. "Clever interviewers who never make mistakes reduce their interlocutors to puppets reciting what the researcher has previously thought up" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 53).

As Kvale (1996) notes, the premise of the research interview is based on power asymmetry. As a professional, the researcher sets the agenda for the interview and interrogates the subject. Despite this asymmetry, there is a strange symmetry to it. As experts on their own lives, participants have the power of knowledge. In order to achieve a balance of power dynamics in an interview, the researcher should respect participants' narratives and remain attentive. Therefore, participants in the study were given free rein to express themselves. Even "rambling" was welcomed.

> Inevitably the interviewee will 'ramble' and move away from the designated areas in the researcher's mind. 'Rambling' is nevertheless important and needs some investigation. The interviewee in rambling is moving onto areas which most interest him or her. The interviewer is losing some control over the interview, and yielding it to the client, but the pay-off is that the researcher reaches the data that is central to the client. I always go along with rambling for a while, but try to make a note about what is missed and cover it in the next interview. (Measor, 1985 as cited in Bryman, 1988, p. 46)

Also, to capture a sense of equity and the active stance of the people I interviewed, I refer to them as "participants" instead of using other terms commonly used in qualitative research such as "subjects", "informants" or "respondents" (Seidman, 2006, p. 14).

The interviews were audio recorded. The practice of recording qualitative interviews is now widely recognized as a good practice, since making detailed notes at the end of the interview is not feasible (Elliott, 2005). By recording the interview, the interviewer can devote full attention to the interviewee instead of having to pause to take notes. Although participants initially appeared mindful of being recorded, within a few minutes they became oblivious of it. Interviews were concluded when both participants acknowledged that they had made all the observations they deemed necessary.

In addition to interviews, the research design also included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). FGDs facilitate interaction among participants who share some common characteristics. In addition to revealing common concerns, the interaction even raises questions that were not considered previously and encourages participants to participate in unexpected ways (Robinson, 2012). Three focus group discussions with six to seven participants each were planned to discuss topics related to teachers' work lives.

4.5 Challenges of working with teachers' narratives

> Any attempt at describing or evaluating the complex human social condition is prone to distortions, omissions, reductions and elaborations. All we hope to achieve in understanding the human condition is likely to be limited, little more than a glimpse through the window of research. (Samuel, 2009, p. 3)

Using teachers' narratives as 'data' is not without its challenges. There are several questions regarding the validity and effectiveness of this method. One may ask, for example, if we are capable of truly understanding other people's subjective worlds. To address this question Seidman (2006) agrees with Schutz's reasoning that we can never completely understand

another because to do so would mean entering into their stream of consciousness and experiencing what they are going through. While acknowledging this limit is important, our empathetic efforts to make sense of the actions of others may still yield valuable insights.

It is also pertinent to question whether the subjective realities of participants are accurately and truthfully expressed by what they say. In the anthropology of experience, one of the key problematics is the relationship between experience and its expressions (Bruner, 1986). According to Bruner (1986) only a naive positivist would believe that expression equates to reality (1986). He emphasizes the distinction between *life as lived* (reality), *life as experienced* (experience), and *life as told* (expression) (Bruner, 1986, p. 6). The richness of our lived experience is not fully captured in our accounts for a number of reasons: some experiences are inchoate and we simply do not understand what we are experiencing, our experiences are not readily adaptable to a story format, we lack performative and narrative resources, and our vocabulary is limited (Bruner, 1986). Furthermore, as social scientists interpret and describe people's expressions, new stories and subjects are created. It begs the question of whether we are being withdrawn from reality, or are we becoming detached from facts? Denzin asserts with Doctorow, "there is no longer any such thing as fiction or nonfiction, there is only narrative" (Denison, 1998, p. 52). Hence, we have multiple forms of narrative, including performance texts, ethnography, journalism, novels, history, biography, autobiography, ethnography, and so on (Denison, 1998).

Denzin's response is informed by a postmodern sensitivity. Nevertheless, researchers have responded to this question in more pragmatic ways. Based on experience, a researcher can sense whether a respondent is being honest, just as an experienced horse trader can recognize when a particular deal is approaching a successful conclusion (Platt, 2012). Even if the researcher is unsure whether her respondents were truthful during interviews, from a

sociological perspective, she still has valuable data at her disposal. In the words of Galtung (1967), "The spoken word is a social act, the inner thought is not, and the sociologist has good reasons to be most interested and concerned with the former, the psychologist perhaps with the latter" (as cited in Platt, 2012, p. 21). A respondent's non-truth provides insight into what they consider to be a positive social image. Their hesitations to speak honestly indicate the significance of the topic under discussion in their lives.

On the other hand, there is the issue of "crisis of representation" and "crisis of legitimacy," as discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). “The issue here is by what right, and to what extent, can I claim to represent the life of someone else in my research writing?” and whether “a text is a true and fair report of a state of affairs in the world” (Geelan, 2007, pp. 22–23).

> The point is that both the Other and more mainstream social scientists recognize that there is no such thing as unadulterated truth; that speaking from a faculty, an institution of higher education, or a corporate perspective automatically means speaking from a privileged and powerful vantage point; and that this vantage point is one to which many do not have access, through either social station or education. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 as cited in Geelan, 2007, p. 23)

Denzin and Lincoln propose several solutions in order to address these issues. For example, a way to establish legitimacy might be to focus on the verisimilitude of the text rather than its correspondence with reality. Verisimilitude can be achieved through adhering to the rules of appropriate genre while reproducing reality in a text. Verisimilitude, however, can always be challenged. Verisimilitude does not establish a text as being true, and a text may be considered true even if it lacks verisimilitude.

There is also the issue of romanisation of teachers' stories. In his article on presenting teacher voices in academic literature, Andy Hargreaves (1996) argues that the sponsorship of teacher voice in academic literature has been selective. Devoid of variation, the teacher voices have become overly romanticised. A few renowned researchers (Elbaz, Clandinin, etc.) have studied

the lives of a very small number of teachers (one or two) as part of their research projects. They choose teachers who share their worldviews, who are already known to them and with whom working is pleasurable. It is not uncommon to find instances of such comforting collaboration in studies on teachers. Thus, instead of representing the voices of teachers, they represent the idealised voice of a single teacher. They claim that they represent the teacher's voice as if it were a generic, representative voice.

> Research on teachers' voices and teachers' knowledge is, accordingly, replete with studies of teachers who are caring, committed, and child-centred, but not of teachers who are cynical, traditional, sexist, or racist! What would we say about these latter teachers' voices and the knowledge they articulate? (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 13)

In order to avoid this problem, the selection of participants was divided into two steps. As a first step, some teachers who met the selection criteria were randomly selected from the master list. In the second step, participants were purposefully selected from the second list in order to maximize the variation in the final sample.

Furthermore, the limited number of narrative interviews conducted in this study limits the possibility of generating generalisable results, as is common in qualitative research. There are some researchers who consider this a "shortcoming," but qualitative researchers view it as a price to pay for gaining a deeper understanding of the topic of inquiry. Furthermore, the search for generalisations or "law-like" results is a vestige of the positivist paradigm that has already been discredited (Porpora, 2015). According to critical realism, reality is an open system in which multiple entities operate simultaneously. No law can determine beforehand the outcome of a process without taking into account all the context-relevant facts. In the words of Lincoln and Guba (2000, p. 39): “Local conditions, in short, make it impossible to generalise. If there is a 'true' generalisation, it is that there can be no generalisation.” We can only formulate working hypotheses and identify a few major patterns within the data. The in-depth interview method is suitable for generating a number of hypotheses that may be investigated further, if

necessary, using quantitative methods. Moreover, case studies and in-depth interviews have the potential to disrupt widely held beliefs and established patterns by presenting discordant examples.

4.6 Context of the study

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in the Keonjhar district of Odisha. Keonjhar (also called Kendujhar) district is located in northern Odisha (Figure 4.1). In colonial Odisha there were primarily two kinds of territories. Some areas were directly ruled by the colonial government while other areas were princely states. The kings of princely states ruled over their territories while remaining subjugated to the colonial government. Keonjhar was one of these princely states ruled by the Bhanja dynasty since 12th century AD. Areas that were directly administered by the British underwent a certain degree of modernisation during the colonial period. Better transportation, communication and educational facilities were available in these areas. In contrast, princely states had less revenue available to spend on infrastructure. As a result, they remained relatively isolated from the outside world. While some parts of Odisha, particularly the coastal region, were rapidly transforming with the spread of education, the emergence of professionals and elites and the rise of political awareness, changes in other parts of the state, such as Keonjhar, were rather slow (Salim, 2004).

Extending over an area of 8303 sq. km. Keonjhar is the 4th largest district of Odisha (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Odisha, 2020). To facilitate administration the district has been divided into three subdivisions and 13 blocks. Large parts of the district are hilly and forested. The northern hilly region contains rich deposits of iron ore and other minerals. Keonjhar used to be a trade centre for the farm and forest produces. Now the economy of the district relies heavily on mining and mining related activities such as transportation. Due to heavy mining activities in the last two decades environment pollution and health hazards have

emerged as the main issues in this region. Besides mining, what gives unique character to the district is its tribal population. More than 50 tribal communities constituting 45.4 percent of the total population inhabit in this district (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Odisha, 2020). Table 4.1 presents basic demographic data of the district along with state and country averages.

Figure 4.1

Location of Keonjhar

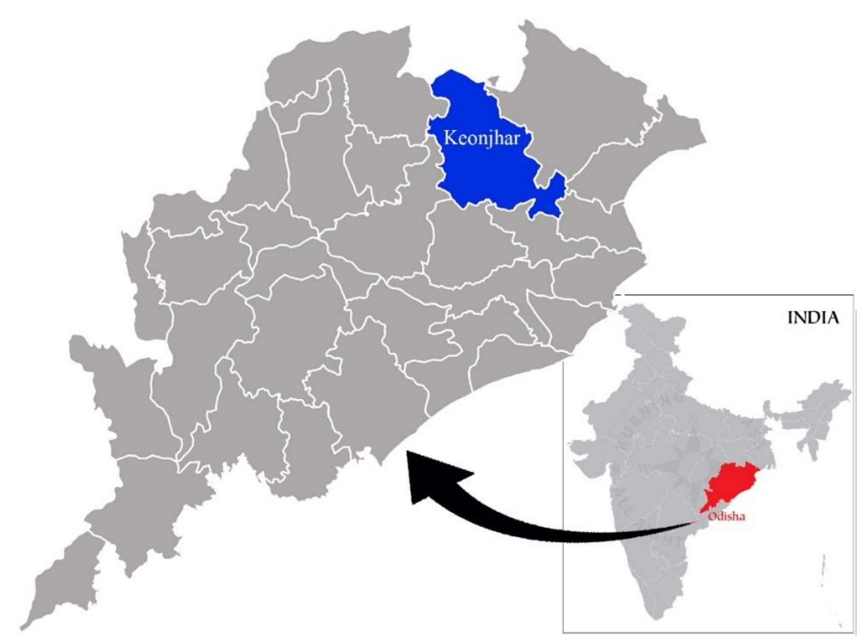


Table 4.1

Basic demographic data of Keonjhar vis-à-vis Odisha and India

	Keonjhar	**Odisha**	**India**
Total Population	18,01,733	4,19,74,218	1,21,08,54,977
Decennial Growth (2001-2011)	15.35%	14.05%	17.7%
Population Density	217	270	382
Urban Population	14.04%	16.69%	31.1%
Scheduled Caste	11.6%	17.13%	16.6%
Scheduled Tribe	45.44%	22.85%	8.6%
Sex Ratio	988	979	940

(Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Odisha, 2020; Census of India, 2011)

Table 4.2

Literacy rate in Keonjhar vis-à-vis Odisha and India

	Keonjhar	Odisha	India
Literacy Rate	68.24	72.87	73
Male Literacy Rate	78.12	81.59	80.9
Female Literacy Rate	58.28	64.01	64.6
SC Literacy Rate	73.77	69.0	66.1
ST Literacy Rate	53.24	52.24	58.9

(Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Odisha, 2020; Census of India, 2011)

There are 18 Education Blocks in Keonjhar district. Based on the raw data collected from the office of the District Project Coordinator (DPC), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), in 2018, there were around 3200 schools (institutions providing education up to grade 12) with 15800 teachers in this district. Out of this around 11700 teachers were working in schools run by the state government. This figure includes around 3000 contract teachers (yet to be regularised) working in the district. Out of the total number of teachers working in the district 61% were male while 39% are female. More than 50% of the teachers belonged to the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) (Table 4.3).

The data also indicated that there were a greater proportion of teachers working at the elementary level, but the same was true for schools as well. However, elementary schools had fewest teacher per school and per grade (Table 4.4). There were only two or three teachers in more than 50% of schools (Figure 4.2). A rural-urban disparity in the assignment of teachers was also revealed by the data. In rural areas, 92.5% of schools were located, while only 87.2% of total teachers were assigned to those schools. As a result, there were more teachers per school in urban schools (Table 4.5).

Table 4.3

Social category of teachers in Keonjhar

Category	No. of teachers	Percent
SEBC	8084	51
General	3616	22.8
ST	2637	16.6
SC	1510	9.5

(Calculated based on raw data received from the office of DPC, SSA, Keonjhar)

Table 4.4

School category-wise distribution of teachers in Keonjhar

School Category	No. of Schools	% of total schools	No. of teachers	% of total teachers	Teacher per school	Teacher per grade
Primary only with grades 1 to 5	1661	50.6	4588	28.9	2.76	0.55
Upper Primary with grades 1 to 8	803	24.4	5097	32.2	6.35	0.79
Secondary with grades 6 to 10	286	8.7	2298	14.5	8.03	2.01
Upper Primary only with grades 6 to 8	255	7.8	707	4.5	2.77	0.92
Secondary only with grades 9 & 10	133	4	863	5.4	6.49	3.24
Secondary with grades 1 to 10	78	2.4	1300	8.2	16.67	1.67
Higher Secondary only with grades 11 & 12	48	1.5	615	3.9	12.81	6.41
Higher Secondary with grades 6 to 12	14	0.4	139	0.9	9.93	1.65
Higher Secondary with grades 1 to 12	7	0.2	245	1.5	35.00	2.92

(Calculated based on raw data received from the office of DPC, SSA, Keonjhar)

Table 4.5

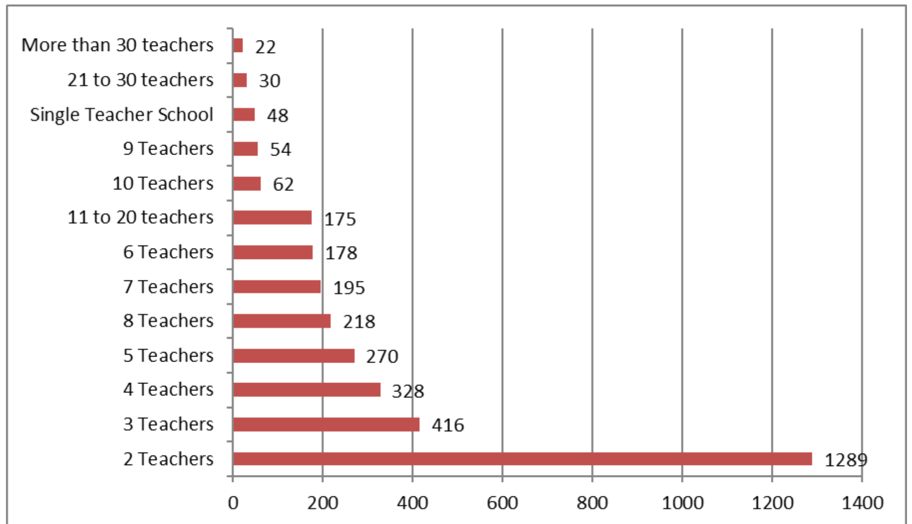
Teachers working in rural and urban schools of Keonjhar

	Number of schools	Percent	Number of Teachers	Percent	Teacher per school
Rural Area	3038	92.5	13828	87.2	4.55
Urban Area	247	7.5	2024	12.8	8.19

(Calculated based on raw data received from the office of DPC, SSA, Keonjhar)

Figure 4.2

Number of schools in Keonjhar in terms of total teaching staff



(Calculated based on raw data received from the office of DPC, SSA, Keonjhar)

4.7 Selection of participants

According to the data received from the office of the DPC, Keonjhar, in 2018, there were approximately 3000 early career teachers working in elementary schools in Keonjhar. Accordingly, more than 3000 teachers met the criteria for being included in the study. In order to select participants, 100 teachers were randomly selected from the list of all teachers who met the selection criteria. Out of the 100, 20 teachers were selected based on personal characteristics such as age, gender, years of experience as a contract teacher, and social category. The goal was to maximise diversity within a small group of participants. This sampling procedure was roughly in accordance with the method of maximum variation purposive sampling. The following is Erben's (1998) advice for deciding a sample size:

> What the size of such an interview sample should be will be dictated by the purpose for which the research is being carried out. The exact size of any sample in qualitative research cannot be ascertained through quantitative methods. It is for this reason that it is all the more important that the consciously chosen sample must correspond to the overall aims of the study. This

> position has now been well rehearsed in some useful general discussion of qualitative research (e.g. Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Burgess, 1984; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). (p. 6)

Thus, the sample size was regarded as tentative. There was a concern that larger sample sizes and larger datasets would be difficult to manage, while a smaller sample size would not be sufficient to produce a multivocal report. It was decided that the sample size would be increased if necessary. Upon being approached, three participants declined to participate in the study. During the prolonged school closures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, no new participants could be interviewed. Therefore, the final sample size remained at 17. Table 4.6 presents the characteristics of the participants.

4.8 Access and fieldwork

Schools are institutional settings, which means access for research needs to be negotiated and maintained at all stages of the data collection process. This is particularly important in Odisha, where teachers are unwilling to accept unknown visitors into their schools. During the data collection process, some of the teachers recounted stories in which journalists visited their schools during working hours and took photographs and videos. After those visuals appeared on television and in newspapers along with reports of mismanagement in these schools, the local education administration severely reprimanded the concerned teachers.

In order to ensure official access to schools, permission was sought from the District Education Officer (DEO) of Keonjhar. The DEO allowed visits to the schools where the 100 teachers selected in the first round were posted (Annexure 2). However, as it turned out the DEO's permission was only the first step of the process. It was the head teachers who proved to be the actual gatekeepers. Although the DEO had sent a copy of the permission letter to all the schools included in the sample, the head teachers still needed to be convinced that the study did not pose a threat to them or their schools. Several of them understood the rationale of the research and allowed the contract teachers working in their schools to be interviewed. In addition, they

Table 4.6

Characteristics of participants

No.	Name	Age (as of 2019)	Gender	Social Category	Education	Year of joining	Work experience before joining government school	Marital status	Parental status (if yes, no. of children)
1	Sujata	34	Female	General	MSc, BEd	2018	4 years. Teaching in private schools and colleges.	Yes	1
2	Manisha	25	Female	General	BSc, CT	2013	No prior work experience	No	No
3	Sarojini	46	Female	SEBC	MA, BEd	2013	12 years. Teaching in private schools in different cities.	Yes	1
4	Laxmipriya	32	Female	SEBC	BA, CT	2014	No prior work experience	Yes	1
5	Nibedita	26	Female	SEBC	BA, CT	2015	No prior work experience	No	No
6	Prakash	26	Male	SC	+2, CT	2014	No prior work experience	No	No
7	Mohan	41	Male	General	BA, CT	2014	10 years. Insurance Agent	Yes	1
8	Rajendra	27	Male	ST	BA, CT	2015	1 year. Teaching in a private school	No	No
9	Sudhir	30	Male	SEBC	BA, CT	2014	No prior work experience	Yes	No
10	Trinath	24	Male	SEBC	BA, CT	2015	No prior work experience	No	No
11	Ranjan	37	Male	SC	BA, CT	2015	6 years. Teaching in a private school	Yes	1
12	Sourav	24	Male	SEBC	+2, CT	2015	No prior work experience	Yes	No
13	Chandan	29	Male	SEBC	BSc, BEd	2014	No prior work experience	No	No
14	Swagat	30	Male	ST	BA, CT	2013	No prior work experience	No	No
15	Goutam	35	Male	ST	BA, CT	2014	5 Years. Business.	Yes	1
16	Seema	40	Female	SEBC	BA, CT	2013	No prior work experience	Yes	2
17	Ankita	32	Female	ST	MA, CT	2014	No prior work experience	Yes	1

discussed their views regarding the recruitment of contract teachers. Two head teachers, however, remained somewhat suspicious and preferred to be present during the interviews. Because safety and privacy were paramount concerns in narrative research, these head teachers were made aware of the importance of a safe interview space. I found them too curious about the "interview" to leave me alone during my first visit, but during my subsequent visits, they were not intrusive. Similarly, in one school, the head teacher was absent during the first visit; the only other teacher in that school, whose name was included in the sample, refused to take part in the research without permission from her head teacher. She was unsure whether they had received a letter regarding this research from the DEO. Due to her reluctance, a second visit was scheduled during which the head teacher was present and allowed the teacher to be interviewed.

Establishing trust and rapport with participants was the final step in being able to gain access to their worlds. As easy as this step was, it was also quite difficult at the same time. As Goodson and Gill (2011) argue, building trust requires participants to be aware of the research intention and methodology:

> So often, only the researchers themselves are familiar with the methodology and the rationale behind the life history approach to the interview process, and such 'technical' details are seldom conveyed to the research participants. We believe it is crucial for researchers to share their understanding and intentions with the participants. Sharing methodology not only empowers the participants to engage more actively in the research but also reinforces the participants' awareness of the importance of their own experiences and stories in the research…. (p. 37)

Once participants developed confidence in me, they responded to my questions with keen interest. It was evident that most of the participants were happy to answer questions since no one had taken any serious interest in their concerns. If any participant was reluctant to answer a particular question, which was evident in their brief responses, they were not further probed in that matter.

Several participants, primarily females, requested that they be interviewed only at school and during school hours. They managed to take time out of their busy schedules, mostly during the last hour of school for the interview sessions. Nevertheless, it was ensured that no other teacher was within audible distance during the interview process. The male participants were happy to interact outside of school and even at their residences. The focus group discussions were held in school premises during after-school hours, and all participants attended without reservations. Over the course of 2018 and 2019, each participant was interviewed three times and three FGDs were conducted. Each interview session lasted about 50–90 minutes.

4.9 Analysis

The interviews were digitally recorded. All the interviews were conducted in Odia, the vernacular language of Odisha. The interviews were later transcribed and translated into English for computer-assisted analysis. During the process of converting oral speech to written text, idiosyncrasies, repetitions, pauses, and grammatical errors were removed since this research is concerned primarily with content of narratives rather than their structure. This type of transcript is described by Elliott (2005) as "clean transcripts " (p. 52). The quotes presented in the subsequent chapters are further edited to ensure brevity and clarity while retaining their essence.

The data analysis was not so much about interpretation as it was about explication: making explicit the meanings and feelings implicit in the narratives. To make sense of the interview data, I prepared profiles of participants whose interviews were comprehensive and compelling enough to be presented as profiles (see Seidman, 2006, p. 123 on profiles as a way of knowing). A first-person narrative was used to write the profiles. In the next chapter, selected portions of three profiles are presented in third-person voice.

The data were analysed following the thematic analysis method elaborated by Braun and Clarke (2006). They define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently if goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998)" (p. 79). Thematic analysis is compatible with multiple theoretical frameworks. With a critical realist perspective it can help understand "the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Table 4.7 presents the phases involved in thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 4.7

Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

In order to become familiar with the dataset, we read the transcripts several times and noted our initial thoughts. Coding process was both inductive and theoretical. In inductive coding, data chunks were coded using descriptive codes (Saldana, 2013). These codes were then analysed and combined into themes and sub-themes. Thematic maps were used to clarify the relationship between themes. Finally, the themes and sub-themes were evaluated to ensure they adequately represented the dataset. The theoretical coding process involved developing a set of codes based on Archer's theory, as described in the last chapter, and applying them to the data.

4.10 Research quality

Quantitative studies must satisfy the following quality criteria: internal validity, generalizability, reliability, and objectivity. However, these criteria are not suitable for qualitative research. Five parallel quality criteria have been proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These are: credibility (whether the research findings represent participants' views), transferability (the degree to which the results can be transferred to other contexts), dependability (the consistency of findings over time), confirmability (establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination), and reflexivity (researchers reflect on their own biases, preferences, and relationship with participants). To satisfy these quality criteria they proposed several strategies including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, member checks, audit trails and so on.

Seidman (2006) views these strategies as mechanical and instead favours common sense approaches to research quality. He states:

> What are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms. We must grapple with

> them, doing our best to increase our ways of knowing and of avoiding ignorance, realizing that our efforts are quite small in the larger scale of things. (Seidman, 2006, p. 26)

Maxwell (2012) agrees with the argument that there are serious flaws in the procedural criteria for validity or trustworthiness.

> Phillips stated what seems to be a consensus: "In general it must be recognized that there are no procedures that will regularly (or always) yield either sound data or true conclusions" … Brinberg and McGrath made the same point: "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques… Rather, validity is like integrity, character, and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances". (Maxwell, 2012, p. 129)

From a realist stance he argues:

> [A]ny assessment of the "validity" of a study's conclusions is not simply a matter of determining whether specific procedures have been used, or even of how carefully or rigorously they have been applied, but of considering the actual conclusions drawn by using these procedures in this particular context. (Maxwell, 2012, p. 132)

As discussed before, the design itself is instrumental in improving the internal validity of this study. Narrative interviews generate more accurate, truthful, or trustworthy data than structured interviews that ask standardised questions to each participant (Elliott, 2005). By using their own vocabulary, participants provide more detailed descriptions of the topics discussed. Narrative interviews empower participants and ensure that their experiences do not become fragmented.

For enhancing the validity of my study, I am also motivated by Geelan (2007) to consider the criteria of *utility* and *resonance* (p. 21). Lather (1986) sees the utility of a study as its "catalytic validity" (Geelan, 2007, p. 75). The catalytic validity of a study refers to the extent to which it enables, empowers, and encourages others to act. Catalytic validity can be established if my study encourages other researchers to explore the lives of teachers, and enables teachers to interpret and articulate their experiences so that they can speak out against policies that contradict their lived realities. It is also my hope that this study will find resonance among teachers, and that they will recognise its verisimilitude. In the words of Van Manen (1990),

"the essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (as cited in Geelan, 2007, p. xii).

4.11 Ethics

The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research at the National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar. To ensure the safety of participants in this study, all standard procedures were followed. Participants were requested to provide oral consent to participate in this study. To explain the objectives, methods, and implications of the research to participants, I prepared a standard script in Odia (Annexure 3). In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms have been used for all names. This study's data have been stored in safe storage and will be deleted once the study has been verified.

However, the ethical responsibilities of a study go beyond following a set of standard guidelines. As an example, while seeking consent for participation in the pilot study, I realised that participants did not have a clear understanding of what a narrative or qualitative approach entailed. The interview guide consisted only of a list of topics that were to be covered in the interviews. So, I prepared a complete interview schedule in Odia for participants to browse during our first meeting. I encouraged them to make an informed decision before committing to participate in the study. I hoped that reviewing the interview schedule would help them get a better sense of what I expected, and to consider their physical, psychological, and moral concerns regarding participation in this study. This step helped three participants realize that each interview would require at least an hour, leading them to decline participation.

When writing this thesis, I made unavoidable decisions regarding which quotes to use as evidence, which ones are more appropriate, detailed, and meaningful. Not every participant was equally eloquent. Czarniawska (2004) describes the problem as follows:

> As the map must not be the same as the territory, it is necessary to silence some of the voices that form the polyphony of the world and to give some more space than others. …The problem is common: whom to include, whom to exclude, and who deserves which type of attention? (pp. 120–121)

As a solution to this problem, I placed equal emphasis on judging a quote's suitability as evidence and ensuring fair share of space for all participants. Due to this approach, some compromises have been made and, in some instances, the discussion has been overly lengthy. As a final point, there are a number of fundamental ethical issues which I had to consider since the inception of this project. The excerpt below summarises these concerns and instead of discussing my position on each, I prefer to let the thesis speak for itself.

> Essentially, conceptualising research as a moral act requires us to attend to questions of representation – by what right do I represent another, and for what purposes? It requires us to attend to questions of intention – for what purposes, and in whose interests, am I conducting this research project? If it is not in the interests of the participants (in a positive sense) that it be done, what right do I have to ask them to participate? It requires us to attend to questions of ethics – who has the potential to receive benefits, and who has the potential to be harmed, by this project? But also, who might be harmed if I do *not* publish this research or disseminate these findings? (Geelan, 2007, p. 26)

Chapter 5

Becoming a contract teacher

> School teaching has declined to the status of a least favoured profession. It has become a last resort of educated unemployed youth; part-time business people and young women seeking to find a part-time socially acceptable profession away from a competitive university education system. Yet, due to the sheer demographic demand from schools, an assurance of getting a job seems to draw many participants to teacher education courses. This, however is more of a "safe fall back option" than a formal career choice. (Batra, 2005, p. 4347)

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which participants became contract teachers in government schools. An understanding of participants' past selves is necessary in order to truly understand their present selves and how they envision their future selves. The data indicate that, although there are exceptions, Batra's assertion holds true for most participants. We will examine participants' accounts of career decision-making to expose why, in many cases, teaching becomes a 'last resort' or a 'safe fallback option'. However, before proceeding to the analysis, I present three brief descriptions of the participants' everyday lives. These snapshots may help readers develop a sense of the world of the teachers involved in this study and place the empirical findings in the appropriate context.

5.1 Snapshots from the everyday lives of the participants

5.1.1 Exhausting routines

A typical morning for Manisha begins at 5.30 a.m. Following her morning routine, she eats chudaa (flattened rice) for breakfast. She begins cooking at 6 a.m., which usually takes about 30 minutes. Her main dishes are roti and bhajaa (shallow-fried vegetables). After packing her lunch, she gets ready for her computer class. She is currently enrolled in a PGDCA program. Her primary motivation for joining this course was a matter of interest, as she does not need to learn computers in order to perform her teaching duties. The class is scheduled from 7.30 a.m.

to 8.15 a.m. Following the class, she walks up to the bus stop, which is approximately 15 minutes away. Her school is 30 minutes away by bus. By the time she reaches school, hunger strikes and she eats one or two rotis from her lunchbox. She then writes her lesson plan for the day. Upon arrival of the other teachers, they sign the attendance register and assemble the children for prayer session. Manisha counts the number of students present and makes arrangements for the midday meal. She then proceeds to teach her class until the break. She supervises the midday meal service along with other teachers. Along with her packed lunch, she eats rice that has been cooked for MDM. The head teacher usually engages her in some paperwork during the second half of the day. There are days when she has to deal with paperwork even in the first half. When she is not teaching, she instructs students to recite numbers or perform similar activities.

At 4 p.m., the school day ends. On her way back, she cannot rely on the same bus every day because sometimes she does not get out in time and the buses often run late. She may be able to catch a bus by 4.10 p.m. or she may have to wait until 4.45 p.m. Because she wants to return to town before dark, sometimes she must resort to the more expensive option of hiring an auto rickshaw. After reaching her room, she freshens up and eats some snacks, usually mudhi (puffed rice). Her evenings are spent reading, not for pleasure, but in preparation for exams. Even when she has not submitted any job application, she browses magazines meant for competitive exams. It is important for her to maintain the habit of preparing for exams and keeping up with current affairs. Otherwise, she believes that she will gradually become 'dumb'. This is the reason why she does not offer private tuition. She sits with her books until 9 p.m. She is sometimes distracted by her smartphone. If there are no more left-over rotis in her lunchbox, she makes a few for dinner. By 11 PM, she usually falls asleep.

5.1.2 Lackadaisical attitudes

Rajendra is a 27-year-old unmarried teacher who belongs to the ST community. He teaches at a small rural school located approximately seven kilometres from the highway. However, reaching the school is difficult as the village roads are damaged, and there are many turns to be made. It was around 1.45 pm when I arrived on my first visit. At this time of day, children enjoy their lunch break, and schools are often buzzing with activity as children run around and play. It was a surprise to find the school premises to be unusually quiet. There were two or three children roaming outside. First, I observed a building with asbestos roofs that appeared to be very old, and I later learned that part of it had been abandoned. One room in this building was still in use due to a lack of classrooms. As I approached the room, I noticed a teacher sitting there. This teacher seemed in his late 50s and was the headmaster of this school. When I greeted him, he asked a student to bring a chair for me. I explained my purpose for visiting the school. The teacher I hoped to meet that day - Rajendra - had already left school during lunch break for personal matters. The HM had permitted him to leave. After learning that I was there to meet Rajendra, the HM contacted him and asked him to return. As I waited there, I learned that the HM was conducting the half-yearly examination.

It felt as if the room was dark and suffocating. The windows were closed. As the exam was about to end in a few minutes, all were preparing to leave. There was no electricity at this school. A day prior to my visit, an electrician had installed the wiring. The walls of the classroom had turned yellow and dirty. All of the usual paintings that one finds in primary schools were there, but they appeared faded, possibly having been painted a decade ago. The furniture in the room consisted of a small wooden table and two plastic chairs. Six students were sitting on a rug inside the classroom and writing something on very small pieces of paper. They were taking the written examination, following which they would take the viva. Once a student submitted their answer sheet, the HM asked a few questions pertaining to mathematics.

These students were in fifth grade. About 7-8 children were playing and waiting outside. Their viva was over. The students from grades one through four returned to their homes shortly after lunch because their examination had ended in the morning.

The HM checked the answers immediately and reprimanded the students for their mistakes. During the viva, the 5th graders were asked to draw geometric figures on the blackboard and to answer questions related to angles, length, breadth, etc. The blackboard had turned grey over time. The HM encouraged students who were not responding to his questions by rephrasing them and providing clues. Those who knew the answer were quick to respond. Those who did not know the answers stared at the blackboard until the HM relieved them after about thirty seconds.

All students were dismissed following the viva. The HM locked that classroom and we made our way to the recently constructed concrete-roofed building. This building has two rooms: a mid-sized classroom and a small office room. The office felt cluttered and stuffy. The room contained one steel almirah, piles of files and papers, a table, three chairs, a drum, and many other small items. The HM talked about government schools, teachers and students. He said:

> This may be my last job before I retire. It is the worst school I have ever worked in. People living close to the school defecate in the school garden on a regular basis. At the time I joined this school, the garden was overgrown with grass. The grass was cut, but it led to the defecation issue. The students here all belong to a particular tribe. The majority of men work as day labourers and are uninterested in education. As much as I tried to teach, students' attendance dropped sharply. Now, we allow children to play after their first or second hour in the classroom. The school should be closed down. I work sincerely, even if it is difficult to put my heart into this. At this age, I cannot risk disciplinary action against me. As well, Rajendra has also lost enthusiasm for his work and is exerting himself. I understand his position. So, I do not enforce strict rules on him. (The head teacher of Rajendra's school)

Rajendra arrived around 2.45 p.m. I had parked my motorcycle outside the school's entrance. Rajendra parked his motorcycle outside the office. As far as I have observed, all teachers who

ride motorcycles do so. During a visit to another school, I observed a female teacher warning her male colleague about this. She told him that he could not ride his bike in the school compound and park it on the school verandah. ‘Did you not read the order regarding this matter? Now it is banned’. The male colleague smiled and parked his motorcycle in the usual place- the verandah.

5.1.3 Vulnerable moments

Seema teaches in a primary school located near a small town. In that area, there are two private schools serving the children of relatively affluent families. Children of daily wage labourers, mostly from tribal communities, attend Seema's school. The school has 11 teachers and eight grades. A high school is located adjacent to this school, and a few years ago both schools were merged. At the time Seema began working at this school, there were 70 to 80 students in each grade. The grades were not further divided into sections since there were no additional classrooms available. Managing a class with 70 children was a challenge in itself. Somehow, Seema managed to survive those years. In later years, the number of students in a class decreased to 40-50. Seema is the class teacher of grade four.

She is a mother of two children, a 5-year-old girl and a 2-year-old boy. Her in-laws' village is about 80 km from her school. As her husband started a small business near this school, she preferred to be posted here. She is considered a 'local' teacher at school since five of her colleagues come from farther districts. Seema's mother-in-law often stays with them and looks after her children while she is away at school. In the middle of March 2020, the Odisha government announced the closure of schools as a precautionary measure to contain the spread of Covid-19. The Head Teacher of Seema’s school instructed all teachers to be available on the phone for further directions. A few days later, the union government announced a nationwide

lockdown. Seema's mother-in-law went back to their village as Seema was available to take care of the children.

The closure of schools resulted in the stalling of the Midday Meal Programme as well. Therefore, the government decided to distribute coupons that could be used by parents to collect groceries from PDS stores. Teachers were called back to prepare coupons. Seema and some of her colleagues who were still there contacted parents to collect coupons from the school. About 60-70% of them came to school as requested. The teachers ensured that social distancing norms were being followed during this exercise. Teachers personally visited the homes of parents who did not come to school. During the lockdown, many of them had already left for somewhere else.

A few days after the coupon distribution, Seema received another instruction. Her role was to be a member of a door-to-door survey team. Together with health workers, she visited houses in the area in order to collect information on the health status of residents. Each day, they were required to visit 50 houses. As she was putting herself and her family in danger by venturing outside, Seema was not in the best of spirits. A member of her team gave her two masks. She knew very well that these masks would not be able to completely protect her from the virus. As the survey progressed in the scorching heat of April, Seema, who usually sweats profusely, was unable to adhere to the injunction not to touch her face. Although she was careful at first, how long could she refrain from touching her face?

Next, textbooks were delivered to the office of the Block Education Officer (BEO). The Head Teacher asked the peon (who used to be a part of the high school before the merger) to bring textbooks to the school. Teachers were once again called upon to sort books and distribute them to the children. Seema was pleased that at least the children would have something to read now. She personally visited the homes of the children in her class and distributed books. Seema had

considered connecting with students via WhatsApp before the government ordered teachers to do so. However, she did not initiate any action since not many students were available on WhatsApp and it seemed unfair to contact only a few students.

When the government instructed teachers to create WhatsApp groups for their students, the teachers at Seema's school began updating the list of students' phone numbers. In some cases, students had provided the contact numbers of relatives and neighbours since their parents did not possess phones. In grade three no students had access to WhatsApp. Out of 49 students in grade four only nine could be connected through WhatsApp. Seema formed a group with those nine students. Following the government's instructions, she shared a few questions with the students and asked them to pass them along. It was obvious to her that her efforts would not be of much benefit to many. Even the children in her group were hardly responding. She called some parents and talked with a few students. According to Seema, it was rare for these parents to monitor their children's studies under normal circumstances. Their children's education was entirely dependent on teachers. The lockdown had created additional financial troubles for these people. How could Seema expect them to perform the role of an education-focused guardian, a role that they had never performed before? The only thing Seema could hope for was the safety of her students and their families during this pandemic.

Seema received another instruction when the government decided to convert schools into quarantine centres. Her school was identified to be utilized as a quarantine centre. Teachers were asked to serve as supervisors. As soon as the lockdown was announced, teachers from distant districts had returned to their native places. Even the Head Teacher was away and managing the school by phone only. Only Seema and four other teachers were available. Together they had distributed midday meal coupons and textbooks and participated in the health survey. The Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC) of that area decided that the

teachers who were present had to manage somehow. The task involved being present at the school/quarantine centre for six hours every alternate day and ensuring that the inhabitants of the centre were getting food in time, the campus was clean and so on. Health workers would also visit and check the health status of the inhabitants. Seema became very worried when she was asked to work in the quarantine centre. It was difficult to be away for six hours at a stretch from her children at that time. Her mother-in-law could not come back due to the prevailing travel restrictions. She decried the deployment of teachers in such an indiscriminate manner. It seemed unfair to her that the teachers who teach the high school students at her school did not receive a single instruction during the lockdown. According to Seema, the government could not be at peace if primary teachers were at rest and not engaged in any kind of activity. What was the point of merging schools if teachers did not work together? Seema decided to approach the higher authorities to get relief from supervision work. She failed to estimate what was in store for her.

Her first step was to ask the CRCC for suggestions. The CRCC was able to convince another teacher to come down and replace Seema. The CRCC also suggested she write an application to the BEO to approve this exchange. When she arrived at the BEO office, the BEO was not present. She called him. The BEO directed her to give the application to the head clerk. As the clerk glanced at the application casually, he suggested that it should be submitted to the panchayat office since it was the panchayat that had assigned teachers to quarantine centres in the first place. Seema approached the Panchayat officials the following day. In that office, she was instructed to go back to the BEO office and obtain approvals from the BEO and the BDO as well. With these approvals, a revised allotment letter would be issued with Seema's name removed and her colleagues' names added.

This much advice was enough to dishearten Seema. She always wanted to steer clear of bureaucracy which was why all through her teaching career she never complained about anything, never put in a special request, and always did what she was ordered to do no matter how inconvenient it was. But it was different this time. On the one hand, the pandemic was making everyone worried and anxious and on the other hand without her mother-in-law, Seema felt very helpless. She visited the BEO office the following day without giving up hope.

This time she could meet the BEO. The BEO inquired whether her colleague would be willing to come down to work in her place. Seema wondered when teachers started receiving assignments with their prior consent. Nobody asked her whether she would like to work in a quarantine centre for six hours. Having already convinced her colleague, she called him again and the BEO himself spoke with him. After receiving his approval, she headed to the office of the BDO. The BDO treated her like a criminal. He said, “Teachers like you are fraudsters. You have got jobs with fake certificates. The only thing you are concerned about is salary. Whenever you are asked to do something, you easily come up with hundreds of excuses.” Seema quietly gulped this insult and waited for the BDO to finish his ranting against the teacher community. Finally, the BDO granted her plea. Subsequently, the Panchayat office also released a revised order.

Seema, now angry and dejected, decided to donate the salary which she received during the lockdown period to the PM Cares fund through the same BDO. If the government believes she has been paid a salary she did not deserve, for which she has not worked enough, then she should return the money to the government.

Glimpses into the everyday lives of the participants shed light on their hopes, concerns, commitments, and frustrations. Although Manisha's schedule is hectic, she is driven by a sense of duty to her students and the prospect of a brighter future for herself. Rajendra and his HM

have become disinterested and frustrated due to the uncaring attitude of the parents. As a teacher, Rajendra has little to show for his professional accomplishments. When Seema is forced to swallow insults hurled at her for the sake of her family, she feels powerless. In the absence of any means of raising her voice, she considers returning her salary as an act of protest. These snapshots serve as a prelude to the present chapter and the following two chapters that present empirical data.

5.2 Projects aimed at obtaining employment

As discussed in chapter 3, obtaining a job is not only about securing a livelihood, it also entails acquiring a social identity, which can serve as a source of self-worth. As social identity (SI) is dialectically related to personal identity (PI), Archer (2000) identifies three points of interaction between the two: PI → SI, SI → PI, PI ↔ SI. Following Archer's theorisation, the analysis here aims to explain why participants decided to become contract teachers. For 11 participants, becoming contract teachers in government primary schools was their first job. Among the remaining six, four held teaching positions in private schools, while two had worked in non-educational fields, before joining government schools. Manisha became a contract teacher at the age of 19, while Sarojini did so at the age of 40. During their adolescent years, ten of the participants envisioned themselves as teachers in government schools, and they achieved their goal on their first attempt. For four participants, the intention was there, but the opportunity came much later in life. Three participants never intended to become teachers, but ended up becoming teachers through course correction. The following discussion will explore factors that influenced the participants' decision-making process.

According to Archer's theory, persons belonging to groups sharing the same life chances are viewed as agents. The participants in this study are agents belonging to three major social groups based on class, caste and gender. Involuntarily and differently placed at the intersection of class, caste and gender, the participants interpret their natal contexts in terms of power,

property and privilege. Their perceptions of what is possible, desirable, and attainable are strongly influenced by this context. This context shapes their access to information, opportunities, and role models. Almost all of the participants in this study were born into lower middle-class and in some cases poor families. Since strictly defining class boundaries is unnecessary here, to make sense of the economic situation of participants' natal families, Table 5.1 presents their parents' educational levels and occupations.

Table 5.1

Educational levels and occupations of the participants' parents

Sl. No.	Name	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Father's Occupation	Mother's Occupation
1	Sudhir	Highschool dropout	Illiterate	Farmer	Homemaker
2	Mohan	Highschool dropout	Primary	Farmer	Homemaker
3	Manisha	Matriculation	Highschool dropout	Contractor	Homemaker
4	Trinath	Matriculation	Primary	Labour supervisor	Homemaker
5	Prakash	Matriculation	Primary	Peon	Homemaker
6	Goutam	Matriculation	Primary	Peon	Homemaker
7	Seema	Matriculation	Primary	Clerk	Homemaker
8	Chandan	Matriculation, ITI certificate	Matriculation	Technician	Homemaker
9	Sourav	Higher Secondary	Higher Secondary	Home guard	Homemaker
10	Nibedita	Higher Secondary	Higher Secondary	Clerk	Homemaker
11	Rajendra	Higher Secondary	Primary	Shopkeeper	Homemaker
12	Ankita	Higher Secondary, CT	Matriculation	Teacher	Homemaker
13	Ranjan	Higher Secondary, CT	Highschool dropout	Teacher	Homemaker
14	Swagat	Graduation	Highschool dropout	Shopkeeper	Homemaker
15	Laxmipriya	Graduation	Matriculation	Teacher	Homemaker
16	Sujata	Graduation	Graduation	Teacher	Teacher
17	Sarojini	MA	Higher Secondary	Lecturer	Homemaker

While some of the participants were born and raised in small towns, most lived in villages until they reached high school. In light of limited exposure, it is not surprising that participants considered only a limited number of career options. For example, Manisha whose father was a

small contractor, was acutely aware of her family's economic hardship as an adolescent. Being able to earn and support her family became one of her major concerns. It was not just a matter of wanting a job; she wanted it as quickly as possible. When she was in school, she enjoyed dancing, but never had the opportunity to develop that passion into a profession. She was not eligible for reservation on the basis of her caste. Therefore, she believed that she would have difficulty obtaining a highly coveted government job. When she was in the 12th grade, a teacher came to her rescue and helped her through the confusion. He advised her to consider becoming a teacher. Together, they decided that she would enrol in a B.Sc. degree next, followed by a B.Ed. Her grade 12 examination results were not very encouraging. She was midway through her B.Sc. program when her aunt, who was a teacher, pointed out that she might not receive enough marks in B.Sc. to be eligible for admission to a B.Ed. program. However, her grades were enough to enable her to qualify for a seat in CT. The Certified Teacher (CT) program is a two-year course of study that is available upon completion of grade 12. Currently, this program is known as the Diploma in Elementary Education (D. El. Ed.). According to Manisha's aunt, in the future, Manisha would be able to earn both a bachelor's degree and a B.Ed. degree in distance mode. Manisha's parents agreed with this reasoning and Manisha left B.Sc. for CT.

Manisha's account illustrates that family members, friends, and, most importantly, teachers play crucial roles in the process of making career decisions. Seema's journey follows a similar trajectory. Her father worked as a clerk. While his income was secure and decent, it was not sufficient to support his large family of five children. The third child in the family was Seema. Her two elder sisters did not seek employment and were married. Seema used to think she would also follow the same path as she had no idea how to land a job. Her uncle's intervention played a pivotal role in her journey. Since she was a bright student, her uncle recommended she apply for CT while completing her undergraduate studies. As far as her father was

concerned, even the B.A. she was pursuing was inconsequential. He had planned to marry her off as soon as he found a suitable partner for her. So, he gave his support to her decision to leave B.A. for CT.

A few participants belonging to the SEBC and unreserved categories considered the reservation policy unfair. Like Manisha, Trinath also grew up in a financially struggling family and desperately sought employment. He said:

> I passed the OTET on my second try. I scored 88 on my first try. The cut-off for general candidates was 90. The introduction of the OTET was a positive step. However, the qualifying mark should be the same for all categories. When the Indian Constitution itself specifies different rules for different categories, what more can I say? CT admission, OTET, recruitment – at every level some categories benefit more than others. There must be a level at which the qualifying standard is the same for everyone. (Trinath)

The participants belonging to ST and SC categories did not mention reservation as an enablement on their path to becoming teachers. However, it is unlikely that they would not have taken it into account while designing their employment plans.

Sujata's experience of making the transition from student to teacher provides a contrasting perspective. Sujata is the only participant in this study whose parents were both teachers in government schools. Being a teacher, however, did not appeal to her during her adolescence. Her reasoning was, "I enjoyed the fact that both my parents were teachers. However, it made a teacher's job too familiar for me to find it even remotely exciting. I wanted to be something different. My childhood dream was to become a police officer." Unlike Manisha, Sujata did not appear to be in any hurry to find employment. The stable income of her parents allowed her to contemplate unconventional career options as a child and to experiment later in life.

She considered studying engineering after passing the grade 12 examination. However, her parents were unimpressed with the idea of their 'daughter' becoming an engineer. They advised her to pursue a B.Sc. degree instead. Having no idea what type of career she wanted, she

enrolled in an M.Sc. program after graduating with a B.Sc. Meanwhile, her friends were preparing for competitive examinations to obtain jobs in banks, railways, and public corporations.

> I never liked working in a bank. My dream of becoming a police officer also faded. I was tall and in good health. However, I was not prepared for the physical test. I would have needed to learn to swim. I used to have pain in my chest while running. Another option was to do an MBA. I would have enjoyed a position in the corporate sector. However, my parents disapproved of corporate employment. My father suggested two paths: either be a lecturer or a civil servant. (Sujata)

One thing was certain by the end of the M.Sc. program: Sujata did not enjoy academics as much as she had hoped. Qualifying the National Eligibility Test (NET) administered by the University Grants Commission (UGC) would have made her eligible for a lectureship. She abandoned this idea: 'the NET or the civil services exams require intense study. My willingness to study hard had waned. I was wondering if I could get a job without much preparation.' Her concern about her physical well-being was hampering her efforts to obtain employment.

She received a job offer from an unaided college near her hometown thanks to family connections. She was to work without a salary until the college received a grant. After teaching for two years there, she resigned since as an unsalaried lecturer she was unable to establish a social identity around that job. Still, she developed a liking for teaching, which prompted her to seek out teaching positions. She became a teacher in an English-medium school. After a year, she got married and moved to another town where she obtained a contract teaching position in a Central School.

> I worked as a TGT for the first six months. Afterwards, a permanent teacher filled this position. After waiting for a couple of months, I was informed of the next vacancy announcement. I joined again as a contractual PGT. It was while working at this school that I realised how much I enjoyed teaching. There was no doubt in my mind. I was satisfied with both my work and my salary. There was a system, a way of teaching and learning there that greatly appealed to me. I was wondering if I could obtain a permanent position there if I obtained a B.Ed. degree. (Sujata)

She applied for B.Ed. twice without success. Then the selection process was mark-based. During the third attempt, the selection process changed. Candidates were now required to take an entrance test instead of being selected based on marks. Sujata was selected to study B.Ed.

In Sujata's case, her experience in the practical order cemented her decision to become a teacher. According to Laximipriya's narrative, this can occur even at an early age. Laxmipriya vividly remembers the first teaching opportunity that sparked her interest in pursuing a career in teaching. When she was in grade six, her mathematics teacher asked her a question in class. There was nothing unusual about it. Teachers had asked her many questions in class before that moment. She was able to respond at times, but remaining silent was also an option if she was unsure of the answer. On that particular day, however, when she was unable to answer, her teacher instructed her to walk up to the blackboard. After solving the question on the board, the teacher set her a similar question. Her understanding of such questions had improved by this time, and she was able to answer the second question quickly. The teacher then asked her to explain her solution to the entire class. The teacher encouraged her to solve similar questions and explain them to all students until all of them understood. In retrospect, Laxmipriya views this incident as a pivotal moment in her life. She recalled:

> There were children in my class who were even further behind me in terms of their academic performance. I began to assist them. Over time, I realized that I was able to communicate things in a way that my friends could easily understand. I had gained confidence following that incident. My father was also a teacher, but I had not seriously considered becoming a teacher before grade six. However, after that incident, it seemed that I was destined to be a teacher.

First-hand experience in the practical world may not always be required to commit oneself to a particular role. Observations can sometimes be sufficient to generate interest. Ranjan decided to become a teacher during his school years in order to emulate the footsteps of his father, who was a teacher. His father's personification of the role of a teacher might have contributed to his conviction that he too desired this lifestyle.

> As a teacher, my father enjoyed great popularity. Since I was a child, I have witnessed students and their parents asking him to teach after school hours. Now that he is retired, he devotes his time to agriculture. Even so, he continues to teach at home. He does not charge or accept any fees for tutoring students at home. (Ranjan)

Observing people in different roles can also help young people make decisions about which roles are *not suitable* for them. Mohan's aunt was a teacher. He said:

> When I was in school, my ultimate goal was to secure a government job - either as a clerk, a railway employee, or a manager in one of the PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings). I never intended to become a teacher. My aunt was a teacher and I had seen what kind of difficulties teachers had to go through then. (Mohan)

Becoming a teacher can also fit into one's modus vivendi as a pragmatic but uneasy compromise. The narratives of Prakash and Rajendra demonstrate how such compromises are reached. There was disappointment in Prakash's family as a result of his matriculation examination results. Consequently, his father lost all hope in him. The implications of this were twofold for his further education: first, he would no longer be able to expect unqualified financial assistance for his educational pursuits, and second, he would have to prove himself regardless of what he studied. He followed one of his friends and got into a vocational program-his second-best option. A second dilemma arose after two years. The results of his intermediate examination were satisfactory and prompted his family to once again envision a bright future for him. Based on his uncle's recommendation, Prakash applied for the diploma in engineering as well as CT. In the diploma entrance examination, he achieved a high ranking. Having become eligible for admission, he realized the constraints involved in this situation. He considered the cost of studying engineering. He could not even afford the admission fee of Rs. 45000. Fortunately, he was also selected for the CT programme, which he reluctantly accepted as his second-best alternative.

Teacher training also appeared as a third-best and even a lower-ranked alternative in participants' life histories. Rajendra's first choice was to study engineering. While he knew that

he might not score well on the entrance test to qualify for admission to the less expensive government colleges, he could enrol in a private college, as some of his friends did. However, his father refused to make the donation required for admission. This led him to enrol in a B.Sc. program. He was interested in studying physics as an honours subject but only received acceptance into the mathematics honours. His college lecturers assured him that he could later change his honours. However, that did not occur, and he was compelled to remain there for two years. He learned of the CT program during that time from one of his cousins. He viewed CT as an escape route. The course correction, however, was not without objective costs. His two years of study at the B.Sc. level were considered to have been a waste by him and others. Alternatively, he believed that a B.Sc. degree without the honours he preferred would be meaningless to him. More than the appeal of teaching, his dissatisfaction with the B.Sc. program led him to enrol in CT.

Many participants became teachers shortly after graduating from their teacher education programs. For some participants, however, obtaining a teaching position in a government school was a long and arduous process. Sarojini was born in the early 1970s, and her father was a college lecturer. Although she cannot recall how it happened, she had always dreamed of becoming a high school teacher or lecturer since she was a child. Therefore, she selected education as an elective during her undergraduate studies and received her B.Ed. degree shortly thereafter. It was her father's wish, however, that she should study law and become a lawyer. In those days, teacher vacancies in government schools were not frequent. As she waited for a recruitment notice, she pursued an MA and a law degree. Even when teacher recruitment took place, she was not selected. Some of her friends pursued CT studies after completing 12th grade. Sarojini had no intention of becoming a primary school teacher. Therefore, she waited. For brief periods of time, she taught in private schools and unaided colleges.

In 2001, Sarojini got married and moved out of Odisha with her husband. During the next 12 years, she lived in different cities due to her husband's transferable job. She could find a job at a private school in every city she moved to. During that period, several of her friends obtained government jobs one after another. Sarojini felt 'stuck' in her life and lost hope of becoming a teacher at a government school. It was difficult for Sarojini to keep track of recruitment notices in a timely manner. When she did manage to apply, she was not selected. At that time, every district conducted teacher recruitment separately. Since Sarojini was from the coastal region of Odisha, she used to apply for teaching jobs in coastal districts. In 2012, she came to know about the Odisha Teacher Eligibility Test (OTET) and passed it on her first attempt. In the following year, a teacher recruitment notice was published. Eligibility was based on OTET. This time, Sarojini decided to apply for a position in the Keonjhar district and was selected.

This pattern is also evident in the accounts of Ranjan, Goutam, Mohan, and Seema. All of them applied for teaching positions in government schools multiple times without success. Before joining a government school, Ranjan taught in private schools for six years. Salary levels in private schools are extremely low. Ranjan could manage because his father was a government school teacher. Neither Goutam nor Mohan had a family member who earned a dependable income. It was their responsibility to earn a living as efficiently as possible. This ruled out the possibility of teaching in a private school. Goutam joined his brother-in-law's transport business and Mohan found a job at an insurance company. As soon as Seema graduated from the CT program, her father married her off. For over ten years, she was a homemaker. Her in-laws did not consider teaching in a private school to be worthwhile. When these participants had already established their modi vivendi as businessmen, insurance agents, and homemakers, what motivated them to become contract teachers in government schools? For Goutam and Mohan, government employment has its perks, including job security and a steady source of income. For Seema, it is more about acquiring a social identity as a teacher.

5.3 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion indicates that not all participants became teachers because of the inherent merits of the profession. The findings of this study are consistent with Batra's (2005) comments regarding job seekers' attitudes toward the teaching profession in India. Teaching continues to be 'a least favoured profession', 'a last resort', 'a safe fall back option' and 'a socially acceptable profession' for women (Batra, 2005, p. 4347).

For many, being a government employee was more significant than being a teacher. Being a teacher happened to be the most viable way to fulfil their ultimate concern which was obtaining a government job. Obtaining a government position can foster a sense of achievement because the competition for government jobs is fierce. In addition to providing job security and a steady, decent income, government employment may also become a matter of pride since it gives employees a sense that they contribute to society at large.

While many of the participants had the opportunity to teach in private schools, they still had the ambition to become teachers in government schools, even at the elementary level, even as contract teachers, and even in their 40s. Those who did not wish to be teachers became teachers because their preferred alternatives were no longer pursuable. All the participants who aimed to be teachers actually wanted to be 'government school teachers'. In Chandan’s words:

> Although one has to work as a contractual employee for six years, the job still appears lucrative. In the long run, you will become a regular teacher and all of your worries will be over. Now, almost everyone is interested in becoming a government teacher. It's a government job, after all. It's easier to get posted close to home if you're a teacher. The job is not particularly challenging. You will have many holidays and your working hours are fixed. You have enough time for your family. And above all, you get respect as a guru. No matter how high-ranked an officer may be, he must bow before his teachers. A bank clerk doesn’t get that kind of respect. (Chandan)

However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, working for six years as a low-paid contractual teacher can severely damage one's social identity as a government employee. The challenges of surviving as a contract teacher may become so overwhelming that they prompt some participants to re-evaluate whether this career is worth the price that they have to pay in order to continue.

Chapter 6

Surviving as a contract teacher

6.1 Contractual job: A poem

We are neither government employees
Nor are we unemployed slobs
We fall in-between the two
We have contractual jobs.

Neither can we complain
Nor can we tolerate
The disease is such that
Dying is as painful as living
Such is our fate.

No matter how sincere we try to be
People think we are dishonest
Who is to blame for our situation
The prevailing system or the ruling government?

Time flies by
When we are in school with kids
Back home, tension awaits us
How to meet basic household needs?

A contractual job that pays peanuts
We accepted happily
The government did a big favour
So it pays us irregularly.

Some of us chose to be teachers
To earn social respect
The contractual appointment ruined everything

We feel ashamed and inept.

What sin did we commit
The fruit of which we got
We lost our respect and wasted our time
We are left for years to rot.

(Originally written in Odia by Pradip Kumar Pradhan, this poem was shared on Facebook by a public group titled ‘Primary School Teachers Association, Odisha.’ Retrieved on 19 December 2019. English translation by the author.)

The poem expresses the pain and regret associated with working as a contract teacher. The argument of this chapter is that when holding onto a social identity causes suffering and regret, it cannot serve as a sufficient source of self-worth, much less a guarantee of efficiency. In this chapter, I will examine the second moment of the dialectic between the personal identity and social identity of the participants. In the second moment, ‘nascent social identity impacts upon nascent personal identity (SI → PI)’ (Archer, 2000, p. 291). In the first moment, the participants' powers and properties as persons and agents helped them to occupy a social role and become actors. In the second moment, after confronting the realities of their work lives, they evaluated the positives and negatives of their positions. Although most of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of teaching in government primary schools were expected, there were a few surprises. In addition, before joining most participants had underestimated the adverse effects of certain dissatisfactions. The chapter is divided into three sections: the difficulties encountered upon arrival, (un)expected satisfactions and (un)expected dissatisfactions.

6.2 Difficulties encountered upon arrival

Among the participants, seven were assigned to schools that were not conveniently located for them in terms of commute. They had to relocate to join their respective schools. Their relocation marked the beginning of the difficult and compromising choices that they would

have to make over the next six years as a result of the low salary. Prakash, who hails from a neighbouring district, was glad to be assigned to a school in Keonjhar. Having never expected that he would receive a government job, his family was thrilled when he was selected as a contract teacher. He later learned that the distance between his school and Keonjhar town is approximately 20 kilometres. There were two options available to him: he could either settle in the town and commute by bus or he could rent a room in the village where the school was located. His conclusion was:

> I did not want to spend a large part of my salary on rent, and the rents in Keonjhar town are very high. In addition, I would have to spend time and money on travel. On the other hand, living in a village means having no social life. So, I decided to settle in a village adjacent to the highway. It was still seven kilometres away from the school, but at least it was a developed area with many shops and a weekly market. (Prakash)

By the end of his second year at work, Prakash had saved enough money to purchase a motorcycle on EMI and solve the problem of commuting for good. Sarojini had never ridden a two-wheeler before joining as a contract teacher. She decided to live in the village where her school was located. Her enquiry led to the suggestion that there was a vacant room in a certain house near her school. However, the landlord was hesitant since his father was ill and he was afraid a woman living alone would not like living in such an environment. Sarojini had no other option since few people in that village had spare rooms for rent. She insisted that she would have no problem there. After much negotiation, the landlord finally agreed to accommodate her.

Manisha was assigned to a school approximately 15 kilometres from Keonjhar. I was not familiar with the geography of the Keonjhar district. During our recruitment, the staff present there helped us in selecting schools which would be convenient for us to access. This is the school they recommended to me.' The head teacher of the school suggested that she stay in the school hostel while she searched for suitable accommodation. Her aunt stayed with her for the

next three days in the hostel. After being unable to find a safe and affordable room within her meagre budget, she moved into a college girls' residence. During the holiday periods, all the girls headed home, and Manisha was left alone. ‘My salary was increased after two years. Thus, I was able to leave that mess and move to Keonjhar. A teacher at this school was transferred and had to rent a house in the town. She agreed to allow me to live with her.’

6.3 (Un)expected satisfactions

Most participants reported that one of the most positive aspects of their new workplaces was their amicable working relationship with their colleagues. Manisha recalled:

> When I first came here, there were five teachers, including myself. I was the youngest teacher. The teacher who later invited me to stay at her house was teaching here at that time. She was very friendly. Another elderly teacher treated me like her own daughter. Our HM used to say that I was like his granddaughter. We had a pleasant time bonding here. I didn’t face any discrimination or conflicts. (Manisha)

Trinath, Prakash, and Sudhir were posted to schools in which the HM was the only teacher on staff. They all indicated that they could develop a satisfactory relationship with their HMs. As described by Sudhir:

> We are all familiar with schools, teachers, etc. I wasn't expecting any surprises. As far as teaching is concerned, we were given some opportunities to teach during the course of our training. Even then, I was a bit curious about many things when I joined this school. I had to familiarize myself with the children, the villagers, the school, and my only colleague, the headmaster. It took me 10-15 days to become comfortable here. The HM is a fine man. He is in his fifties. Previously, he taught in a nearby village. It was a large school. As a promotion, he was offered the position of ABEO. He declined that offer and came here as HM instead.
>
> Most of the time, he handles all the paperwork and meetings while I concentrate on teaching. I receive guidance and suggestions from him. In our office, we spend time together. Whenever a new notification comes in, we discuss it. The HM explains what the new order means and what I need to do. The HM also shares relevant information with me following any meeting he has attended. We are both very interested in cricket. The HM keeps a schedule of World Cup matches in his pocket. We can’t watch cricket here. Radio broadcasts of matches begin after 2 p.m. Children enjoy their recess and we enjoy the commentary. We also discuss news reports

> about schools and the education department. We also share family issues. Our communication here is open and honest. (Sudhir)

The majority of narratives that discuss participants' interaction with their colleagues indicate that successful relationships are based on mutual respect, collaboration in non-teaching activities, and, most importantly, information sharing. The participants do not feel that the Head Teachers control them by exercising their administrative power. Many Head Teachers, it has been reported, are also anxious to avoid making blunders and require the unforced support of their colleagues. Participants recall times when their head teachers assisted them during difficult times in their personal lives. Sarojini recounted:

> Within a few months of joining, my son became ill. At the time, he was about 16 years old and living with his father in Bangalore. The preliminary diagnosis hinted at something serious. At all costs, I had to visit him. Here at school, I had no idea what I was doing. I couldn't even write my leave application. I was getting phone calls, and I was crying. All the teachers were worried too. The HM suggested that I should go to Bangalore. Around 2 p.m., a train leaves Keonjhar for Bhubaneswar. It was already 2 p.m. when I finally decided to leave. I don't have a personal vehicle and auto-rickshaws are not immediately available in this village. Even so, I prepared myself to make my way to the station. The HM suggested that I use her car and asked her driver to drop me at the station. Luckily, I could board the train as it was running late that day. The following day I took a flight to Bangalore. I did not know when I would be able to return. The HM assured me that there was no need to be concerned about leaves. She took care of everything. (Sarojini)

As an interesting aside, Sourav experienced a peculiar situation during his initial months on the job. There were four teachers including himself and two of them were females. While he quickly formed a friendship with the other male teacher, he found it difficult to interact with the female teachers. He had already worked for four years at the time of the interview. It seemed that he was still shy.

Some participants also indicated that observing senior colleagues during their initial days on the job provided them with valuable learning opportunities. Nivedita said:

> One teacher in my school was very friendly with the kids. This kind of relationship inspired me, and I also began to behave in the same manner. Another teacher taught maths very well. By using games and TLMs, she made her classes fun and enjoyable. I acquired these teaching methods by observing her. (Nivedita)

In the case of three participants, the most exciting aspect of their jobs was the opportunity to teach grade eight students. Most rural schools have grades one through five, but some have grades one through eight. The prospect of teaching eighth-grade students was exciting since the majority of participants had ambitions to become high school teachers. Laxmipriya explained, 'It is not that I don't like teaching younger kids. The younger kids usually don't pay attention and it is difficult to make them learn. Sometimes it feels irritating'. Sujata's school did not have grade eight when she joined. Since Sujata had an M.Sc., the school decided to offer eighth grade as well. Sujata was assigned to teach math, science, and geography to grade 8 students. Later, she also taught math and science in grades 6 and 7. Similarly, Sarojini had an M.A. in Odia, so she was asked to teach Odia in grades 6, 7, and 8. Their dissatisfaction over the fact that they could not become high school teachers, despite having master's degrees, was somewhat alleviated by teaching grade 8 students.

Participants' feeling of freedom and autonomy inside the classroom was perhaps the most significant aspect of their work lives that contributed to their satisfaction at work. They found that the opportunity to work with children was greatly enhanced by the degree of freedom they enjoyed. This viewpoint is reflected in various ways in the following quotes.

> The government has trained us to teach in certain ways and guidebooks such as Samadhan are also helpful. I do not see anything wrong with it. It is good if children can learn through those methods. But we are not restricted. We are free to use our own methods. (Ankita)

> I think the curriculum is fine. Children in Grade 1 are not expected to read or write anything. I sing songs and tell stories to them. During training, we receive instruction on teaching methods. It is mandatory that we use TLMs. Additionally, we need to form groups. A 'dual class' strategy may be adopted if there is a shortage of teachers. There are all kinds of instructions, but I have to decide what is the best course of action. I teach students individually if I cannot teach them

> something in a group setting. Regardless of whether the children are seated in groups or not, I want them to learn. Following instructions can also be difficult because higher authorities sometimes give instructions in multiple ways. The HM, the CRCC, and the ABEO- all suggest different things. There are times when we are told one thing in training and another thing by a visiting officer. My decision should be based on what I think is practical, rather than what others say. I try to adhere to instructions, but I do not follow them literally. Suppose the guidebook suggests delivering a lesson in a single sitting. I need to consider whether my students will be able to learn this much in one sitting. It may take two periods or even three. That will be my call. (Goutam)

> I don't feel restricted in my teaching. Suppose you are familiar with something and believe that learning it is easy. It is reasonable for you to assume that children would also be able to comprehend that with the same ease. But that doesn't happen. Often, it is necessary to find simpler, easier ways to learn. Government guidebooks, such as the Samadhana, provide us with valuable guidance in this regard. If you want to deviate from the guidebook, you are free to do so. (Sujata)

Some participants also pointed out that teaching becomes more fulfilling when students are also ready to learn. There are, however, few participants who have experienced this satisfaction since most students in their classes have learning deficits. Prakash's experience, therefore, seems to be more of an anomaly:

> I do not experience any difficulties teaching here. I have felt this way from the very beginning. Initially, the HM asked me to teach classes 1 and 2. It was easy to teach those children. They were excellent students. After that, I began teaching all of the classes. It is difficult to teach children who have no prior knowledge. Most of these children are from ST or SC families. But more than 70% of our students belong to OBCs. Their parents encourage them to study at home and provide them with private tuition. The number of students here is also low. There are only 37 students in total at this time. I am able to provide individual attention to students who are experiencing difficulties. (Prakash)

6.4 (Un)expected dissatisfactions

When Manisha decided to become a teacher, she imagined herself as a teacher with the same attributes as those who taught her. Also, she hoped that her relationship with students would be similar to the relationship she had with her teachers. She was disappointed to discover that

neither of her expectations was realised. It became apparent to her that not only was she a rule-bound teacher, but her relationship with her students was almost mechanical.

> In my school, teachers and students had a very pleasant relationship. Our teachers really cared about us and loved us. We often received more affection and care from them than we did from our parents. Those teachers taught us, guided us and made us laugh. It was as if they were our parents. They were generally friendly. We considered it important to reciprocate their love. We used to share everything with them. When we encountered difficulties during our studies, we never hesitated to ask them for assistance. We used to find immense joy in even the smallest of things, such as filling up a teacher's water bottle. It was a matter of pride for a student if her teacher asked her to fill her bottle. I had pictured myself as a teacher with all these qualities. However, the reality is somewhat different now. The relationship between the teacher and the student has undergone some changes. Teachers are no longer as affectionate towards their students as they once were. There are now certain rules that govern the behaviour of teachers. A teacher cannot reprimand or punish a student. There are other restrictions too. We need to teach through games. We get detailed instructions and adhere to them. Our teachers never prioritized writing lesson plans but they were better teachers than us. They were freer than us. That is why we remember them to this day. (Manisha)

A sense of restriction also emerged from Ranjan's experience:

> Curriculum decisions are made by the government. We do not have a say in this matter. Our workload is also determined by the government. If we are asked to do something unrelated to teaching, we have to do it. If the government considers that we need training, then we must participate in training programs. It is similar to wearing ready-made clothing. Whether it fits you well or not, you must wear it. (Ranjan)

The list of dissatisfactions participants encountered during their initial years of employment is longer than the list of satisfactions. According to the data, there are at least nine major sources of disappointment for participants: inadequate school resources and infrastructure, inadequate family support for learning, the burden of non-teaching workload, salary woes, a sense of inferiority, difficulties in obtaining a transfer, fractured solidarity among teachers, the need for course correction and being a female teacher. Participants differed in the extent to which these dissatisfactions impacted their lives. However, all of them took note of the negative aspects of their jobs and assessed whether the positive aspects compensated for these. It was their

evaluations that ultimately enabled them to determine whether and to what extent they put their hearts into their work.

6.4.1 *Inadequate school resources and infrastructure*

The lack of adequate resources and infrastructure in schools was probably one of the most apparent issues participants encountered when they began teaching in government schools. Nearly all participants' early experiences are marked by dilapidated buildings, non-existent or non-functional toilets, drinking water facilities, and an absence of boundary walls, classrooms, common rooms, and electricity. The participants witnessed some improvements in their schools over the years following their joining, although some glaring issues were still evident during the interviews. Located in the middle of a wide-open expanse and without a boundary wall, Laxmipriya's school was not immediately recognizable as a school from afar. The path leading to the school was also difficult to discern. The school existed as if it were an island in the ocean. In Rajendra's school, overgrown grass covered the open area. Other than these few instances, most schools, at least from the outside, looked attractive at first glance with their carefully tended gardens and vibrant paintings. According to several participants, a beautiful school garden is an essential feature of a well-run school. Goutam explained, ‘Visitors are positively affected by gardens. Involving children in gardening is a good activity for them. By working productively, they learn discipline.’

Taking a closer look at schools, however, revealed a different picture. Despite the presence of a tube well, it would not be able to draw water for more than ten minutes at a time. Students from two or more grades would be seated in one classroom. Classrooms would be devoid of furniture. The fans would require repair, and the water filters would be lying in offices awaiting installation. For example, Swagat described the status of the school's infrastructure as follows:

> Firstly, there are insufficient classrooms. There is also a lack of furniture. There are not enough tables and chairs for all teachers. The office room does not meet our needs. It is not large enough

> to accommodate all teachers. Our meetings are held on the verandah. There are no teaching aids available. There is a borewell here, but its capacity is insufficient for summer use. Water scarcity begins after January. Without water a toilet is useless. Aquaguard has been purchased, but it has not yet been installed. We do not have a pipe connection. Every classroom has a fan, but most are not working. I am not sure whether I should share all of these details with you. However, this is the reality of our situation. (Swagat)

Anecdotally, Sujata told how the lack of ordinary resources could be demoralizing for a newly hired teacher, and how she responded to this situation.

> We do not have enough chalk; do I need to say more about the infrastructure in this school? You are about to teach mathematics, and then you realise that there is no chalk in stock. It was irritating. I decided to leave this school as soon as possible. Then gradually, I understood the actual situation. I felt sorry for the children. If every teacher thinks like me and leaves the school, children will suffer. I began buying chalks, etc., from my expenses. We were told during our training programs that we should not hesitate to buy a few things for our class. We should not expect the government to provide everything. Instead, we should spend Rs. 50–100 every month to prepare TLMs. I usually buy coloured chalk and other materials to conduct experiments. (Sujata)

It was hard to believe that the funds available to primary schools were so limited that an adequate supply of chalk was not available to teachers. When further questioned, Sujata advised that the question should be addressed to the head teacher. Soon, it became evident that many schools were reluctant to incur modest expenditures on important items. According to the excerpt below, even photocopying question papers can be unaffordable.

> We did not receive the question papers in time for the last exam. For each grade, we received only one or two hard copies of the questions. We copied the questions by hand and conducted the examination. This has been the case everywhere this year. The contingency fund is available for use, but it cannot be used for every purpose. There are many reports that need to be submitted. Several of these documents need to be photocopied. These expenses are covered by the contingency fund. We decided not to photocopy the question papers. (Rajendra)

The question papers for that examination were also not delivered to Seema's school on time. Since her school's headteacher refused to photocopy question papers using school funds, teachers had no choice but to write questions on blackboards.

The lack of adequate infrastructure not only is a source of dissatisfaction for teachers, but it can also lead to bizarre and adverse outcomes. Ankita's school is a case in point where students of grades one and eight are seated in one classroom.

> We have seven classrooms, but eight grades. However, here, grade 1 students sit with grade 8 students. This is an unusual combination. This arrangement has been questioned by every visitor, including the CRCC. Students in grade 1 should be seated in a classroom equipped with blackboards on all four walls. Currently, we have only one room of this type in which grade 1 and 8 students sit together. In an ideal scenario, students in grades 1 and 2 should have been seated here. However, our HM who teaches grade 2 students does not prefer to be in this room. She prefers to teach in one particular classroom that has a direct view of the school gate. From that room, she is able to observe people passing through the gate. All she wants is that room and teaching duty in grade 2. To further complicate matters, this year, one of the teachers is on maternity leave and grades 3 and 4 are already overcrowded. So, you see grades 1 and 8 in one classroom. (Ankita)

6.4.2 Inadequate family support for learning

According to most of the participating teachers, many of the parents of their students do not really care about their children's education. Participants noted that the cultural, social, and economic background of students in government primary schools often hindered their academic performance. The following quotes are indicative of how this issue troubled the participants.

> The parents of our students are not concerned about their children's future. In class 8, there are 17 students. Except for 4-5 students, all others will become drivers, helpers etc. Girls get married as soon as they complete class 10. Parents are indifferent. Some parents prepare *handiaa* (a local alcoholic drink) for selling and to get drunk themselves. Their children will also follow in their footsteps. (Laxmipriya)

> The parents of our students are typically labourers. These children do not study at home. Their education is limited to school. Their living conditions are not conducive to studying. This is a relatively wealthy village since many residents work or own businesses at the district headquarters. However, children from well-off families attend private English-medium schools. Only poor families rely on this school. (Seema)

> I am a perfectionist. I want to teach well and I want to see my students learn. My students are not ready, however, and this leaves me somewhat unsatisfied. There is no child here who can learn at my pace. Here children come from a certain kind of background which is not helping their education. (Sarojini)

> There are 174 students in total here. Approximately 30-40 students are often absent. We visit their homes to inquire about their absence. Their parents also do not force them to attend school. Education is not a concern for most parents. They do not understand what studying entails. It is not sufficient to listen to teachers for four or five hours in the classroom. Children have to study at home as well. Children of conscious parents do that and they are the ones who have high learning levels. (Sujata)

> Our school has 132 students, of whom approximately 30 remain absent. Teachers visit the homes of students who have been absent for an extended period of time. I have also visited such children. The child would be sleeping and his parents would inform us that he is ill. But we know that he is fine. During the months of June and July, when agricultural activities intensify, every adult works in the fields. So older children skip school and stay home to care for younger siblings. Those who regularly attend classes are interested in learning. Others are merely passing the time. (Nivedita)

> In my first week at this school, I taught with full energy (*josh*). To my surprise, students began showing up at school irregularly. Other teachers suggested that I slow down. Even now, I am not entirely at ease with these children. Sometimes it appears that they are learning, but when a visitor asks something, they fail to respond. (Mohan)

The majority of participants reported that many of their students did not attend school regularly. They also did not study at home and were unable to recall or remember what they had learned. It was even more alarming for participants that the parents of their students did not seem to be concerned about these issues. Despite not explicitly stating it, participants appeared to attribute parents' lack of concern for their children's education to their social, occupational, and cultural backgrounds. In the following excerpts, participants describe how they deal with student absenteeism and how 'education-conscious' parents abandon village primary schools.

> Our students have a weak educational foundation. At home, they do not practice what they learn at school. The parents do not supervise their children's studies. Once a child has mastered something, we can move on. Here we have to repeat the same lessons over and over again. There is no guarantee that children will fully understand a concept even if they are taught it for

the entire year. Paying attention in class would have been sufficient even if they did not practice at home. However, they do not have the desire to learn. There is a problem with their attitude. All they want to do is play and roam around. They would like to spend time fishing and searching for fruits in the orchards. We force them to sit in the classroom. If we force them to sit through all the periods at school, they will not attend after two or three days. After the lunch break, they do not want to be in the classroom.

The government now provides uniforms and shoes for children. There were only 12 students in attendance on the day we received shoes for our students. On the following day, 27 children were present. For the next three days, we did not distribute the shoes. All students continued to attend school. It was good. However, the children were only staring at us. They were aware that the shoes had arrived. However, they could not ask us when they would receive them. We felt bad. On the fourth day, some shoes were distributed, and we explained that they would receive uniforms and shoes only if they came to school during the exam period. (Rajendra)

The majority of children in this school do not have grade-specific learning levels. In addition, we cannot be certain that learning levels improve with time. In this part of the village, the environment is not appropriate for education. No one attends private tuition classes. Some students drop out after grade five, while others enrol in a nearby school. Interestingly, it is mostly healthy children who drop out. It is because they are capable of working. They are employed by tractor owners. If we work hard and a child makes some progress, his parents will enrol him in a private school or Ashram school (residential schools for ST children). Every year we issue 2-3 transfer certificates. The best students simply leave. Then what is the point of trying hard? (Chandan)

6.4.3 The burden of non-teaching workload

Along with teaching, teachers in government schools are expected to provide administrative support, organise events, manage midday meals, supervise construction work, collect and submit data on students, maintain records, facilitate visits of officials, open bank accounts for students, update their Aadhaar IDs, help them in getting caste certificates and distribute uniforms and books. Located next to a national highway, Manisha's school received many visiting officials throughout the year. It was, therefore, necessary for the teachers to be ready for unexpected visitors. Being 'ready' generally entailed being present in school when one was not on an officially sanctioned leave and maintaining all records and lesson plans, which

usually attracted the inspectorial gaze. The visiting officers are also likely to reprimand teachers if they observe irregularities in the provision of midday meals (MDM) for children. Manisha was assigned the responsibility of overseeing the preparation of midday meals. This seemingly simple task was costing Manisha more than an hour every day. She described:

> As children, we used to arrive at school before ten o'clock each morning. Today's children do not arrive on time for school. They keep on arriving until 11 a.m. When we insist that students arrive on time and threaten to close the school gates after 10.15 am, the parents come here to argue with us. We cannot refuse entry even if a student is an hour late. We do not get a final count of students present in a day until 11 a.m. Following the final count, MDM ingredients in the required amount are sourced from the storeroom. The number of eggs being cooked should always match the number of students present in the classroom on any given day. There must be one egg for each student. Inspection personnel will verify this. In the event that he does not find enough eggs for students present that day, we will be beheaded. We shall be charged with theft. The fact that some children have arrived late will not be taken into consideration. There are five teachers working here. The first hour or so of every day is typically spent on MDM by two of us. We are required to send reports every two days. We also prepare monthly reports. We must SMS each day the number of present students. We need to record in a register the time at which the SMS was sent. We record how many eggs were cooked that day in the DMF register. We also maintain an MDM register in which we note how much rice, dal, etc., was consumed on a particular day. (Manisha)

One more example of a seemingly simple task that kept Manisha occupied and distracted for days was assisting students in getting their Aadhar cards and caste certificates.

> All fifth-grade students are supposed to get permanent caste certificates. For this purpose, we must inform all students to bring Rs. 65 from home. In addition, we instruct them to ask their fathers to bring the necessary documentation to the school. In this regard, we have to remind them frequently. The next step is to fill out the forms and submit them. Moreover, we must ensure that all students receive their Aadhar cards. A child's Aadhar card should be obtained by their parents. However, if they fail to do it, we have to take the child to the Aadhar centre. (Manisha)

An additional responsibility of the head teacher of Manisha's school was to serve as Booth Level Officer for the village. The BLO acts as a "representative of the Election Commission at the grass-roots level" and assists citizens in obtaining and correcting their voter cards (Election

Commission, 2014). BLOs must ensure that the electoral rolls are error-free and up-to-date by using their local knowledge and carrying out physical verifications. Given the fragile health condition of the head teacher, Manisha and another teacher have offered to carry out BLO duties.

A typical day for Manisha included less than two to three hours of teaching. She became increasingly frustrated because she was no longer 'feeling' like a teacher. In an effort to complete the syllabus, she sometimes rushed, despite knowing that many children might not be able to learn at such a rapid pace.

While some non-teaching work, such as supervising the MDM program, occurs regularly, many non-teaching duties are unanticipated. Teachers usually schedule time for the regular paperwork and distribute it among themselves.

> The last working day of every month is reserved for paperwork only. We calculate attendance percentages and prepare MDM reports. The reports must be submitted to the central school of the cluster by 2 p.m. Therefore, the first half of the day is entirely devoted to preparing reports. Teachers of individual classes and subjects are responsible for some of the work. Work not specific to a class or subject can be completed by any one of us. The HM distributes such work as she deems appropriate. (Seema)

Nevertheless, some head teachers may not distribute work in a fair manner. Sujata's verbatim demonstrates that junior teachers can be asked to take on extra responsibilities.

> I was instructed to update the observation day register and the visitor register. It had not been updated for one and a half years. My joining was to be recorded in that register. Thus, I was required to update the register up until the most recent event - my joining. In addition, there is an MDM register which contains information regarding the receipt of food, the time, quantity, quality, etc. Every day, we are required to write one paragraph. My task was to update that register too. Moreover, I was also instructed to update the hostel register. One of my colleagues advised me not to accept that much work, at least not the host register. According to her, all senior teachers were unwilling to maintain hostel records. I was given that responsibility only because I was new to the school. I gathered courage and declined to maintain hostel records. (Sujata)

Whenever necessary, teachers may be asked to submit data in specific formats. Providing data can be a time-consuming process.

> There is no set amount of non-teaching workload. Anytime they wish, they may message us to submit a report. Each month, we are required to submit 10-12 such reports. We write those reports by hand in specified formats. For large formats, we obtain printouts. Last year, we received money from the DMF to provide eggs with MDM. In those eight months, we were not asked to submit a single report. All reports were suddenly requested after eight months. During the preparation of these reports, many teachers made errors. They did not know how to fill in those tables. In addition, the formats kept changing. If we submit one report today, tomorrow they will request the same data in a different format. As far as I recall, we submitted about six reports regarding the distribution of eggs. The first three reports were rejected. (Sourav)

Several participants expressed the view that submitting data was a waste of time. For example, Ankita stated:

> You make photocopies and fill out forms repeatedly. All of this should be handled by a clerk. When all teachers are female, the situation is even more challenging. They must frequently visit a photocopy shop which may not be in the immediate vicinity. They must walk if they do not own a personal vehicle. We waste a great deal of time on paperwork. (Ankita)

Occasionally, teachers are asked to participate in censuses or surveys. One such survey consumed all of Sarojini's afternoon hours for a whole week. Work of this nature cannot be planned, and teaching is interrupted for several days consecutively.

Four participants reported that they were not particularly overwhelmed by non-teaching work. For example, Laxmipriya said:

> The teacher who is the BLO here has non-teaching duties. We do not prepare MDM here. An NGO prepares and supplies MDM. There is no major non-teaching workload on my part. Maintaining records is an essential part of teachers' duties. We spend almost all of the day in our classrooms. (Laxmipriya)

> Most of the paperwork is handled by the HM. When he asks for my assistance, I do my best to assist. He dislikes travelling. Therefore, I take the documents to the block office or cluster centre. There is less paperwork here since there are fewer students. We can complete every assignment quickly. Teachers take a long time in schools with many students. (Rajendra)

6.4.4 Salary woes

The low salary of contract teachers in Odisha is arguably the most critical factor contributing to their experience of precarity. During the fieldwork, the gross monthly salaries of Junior Teacher-Contractual (JTC) and Junior Teacher (JT) were Rs 7,400 and Rs 9,200, respectively, while the salary of a regular teacher was approximately Rs 25,000 (313 USD). In January 2022, the Government of Odisha increased the salaries of JTCs and JTs by 50% (The Print, 3 January 2022). A JTC now receives Rs. 11000 a month or Rs. 423 per day for 26 working days. According to the latest revision of minimum wage rates, unskilled agricultural workers should receive between Rs. 382 and Rs. 423 per day, depending on location (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2022). Poor pay of contract teachers is more than a problem of survival. It is a challenge to their self-worth as well.

Sarojini's monthly rent is Rs. 1000. Almost every Sunday, she travels to the town to purchase essential items. She spends approximately Rs. 1000 per visit - Rs. 200 is charged by the auto-rickshaw, and the balance is spent on shopping. Each month, she visits her family, which is also a costly endeavour. Her salary barely allows her to make ends meet.

Mohan is 41 years old and is married. Before becoming a contract teacher, he was employed by an insurance company for more than a decade, earning more than Rs. 30000 per month. Having completed his teacher training course, he had attempted to become a teacher in a government school but had never considered teaching in a private school due to the low salaries offered to teachers in private schools. When he was selected to be a contract teacher, he reluctantly joined due to the low salary, but he was also looking forward to becoming a regular teacher after six years of hardship. Soon after joining, he realized that reducing expenses would not be sufficient, he would need to find a second source of income. So, he began offering private tuition classes after school hours. It is not uncommon for parents living in the nearby

town to pay as much as Rs. 2000 each month per child for private tuition classes. Tuition fees for English medium students are even higher.

> Nowadays, most villages have a few students who attend English medium schools. They look for good tutors. The teachers who are being recruited into government schools today are highly qualified individuals. They are capable of teaching English medium students easily. You can earn more than your salary if you offer private tutoring to three or four English medium students. (Sudhir)

Not only is the salary low, but it is also paid irregularly. During the interviews, many participants complained that they had not received salaries for more than three months. Delayed payments are not a problem for teachers living with their families. Irregular salaries pose problems for teachers who reside away from their families in rented houses, as well as married male teachers like Mohan. In the face of financial uncertainty, participants resorted to a variety of strategies, including borrowing from friends and colleagues, purchasing things on credit, and seeking financial assistance from their parents. Sarojini keeps her husband's debit card on hand in case she does not receive her salary for long. Together with his wife and child, Mohan lives in a rented house. He said:

> I have not received my salary for the last three months. I have not paid the rent. The local shopkeepers allow us to purchase items on credit. They are willing to sell us credit because they know that we will eventually receive our salaries. If I need to buy anything from the town, I will have to either borrow or wait. (Mohan)

Providing private tuition not only supplements contract teachers' meagre salaries but also provides a steady income that keeps them afloat when their salaries are delayed.

> I am paid Rs. 9200 per month. Following deductions, I have Rs. 8094 in hand. I live far from my family. My room rent is Rs. 1000. I purchased my bike with a loan. So, I pay Rs. 2600 every month in instalments. It is for two years. Petrol costs me around a thousand rupees. I try to send my family around Rs. 2000. I attempt to make ends meet with the remainder. It is difficult to manage. The situation becomes worse if the salary is delayed. As a way of augmenting my income, I offered private tuition. Almost all government teachers provide tuition services. You can ask our students. Everyone attends private tuition. The teacher who tuitions our students,

> teaches at a nearby government school. He is now a regular teacher. Even so, he continues to offer private tuition classes every morning. As you can see, it is difficult to manage without a steady flow of income. If the government has a problem with teachers offering private tuition, it should raise their salaries. (Prakash)

However, the private tuition strategy may not be feasible for all contract teachers. Parents in remote villages do not pay much for private tuition, nor do they pay on a regular basis. Consequently, many participants were unable to earn additional income from private tuition classes. Besides, young teachers such as Manisha and Rajendra, instead of offering private tuition, preferred to take advantage of their free time to prepare for competitive examinations that might lead to better employment opportunities.

Depending on one's income, one can adjust their standard of living. It is, however, humiliating to compromise one's obligations to others. Rajendra could not refuse his younger brother's request to buy him a smartphone. Prakash's cousin sister was getting married. As a wedding gift, his aunt requested him to buy a necklace for her daughter which he had to oblige. Sarojini's father-in-law was investing his retirement savings in the construction of a house. As the construction was nearing completion, he ran out of money. So, he abandoned the idea of installing tiles on the floor. Sarojini decided to help her father-in-law as much as she could. It was only through borrowing from colleagues and friends that Rajendra, Prakash, and Sarojini were able to meet their financial obligations. Indebted, they had to further reduce their expenses.

The issue of salary was not a major concern for Seema, Sujata, or Laxmipriya as they lived with their husbands who were employed and had decent incomes.

> As my husband is a regular teacher, my salary, while quite low and irregular, does not significantly affect me. In fact, I do not even manage my salary account. All financial matters are managed by my husband. All my salaries are saved. I do not have any long-term financial goals. We already own a good house in town. So, I hope that my earnings will help my son to pursue higher education. (Laxmipriya)

> The last time I received a salary was three months ago. Since I live with my parents, I am not facing any hardship. I have no financial obligations to my family at the moment. They may ask me to contribute once I become a regular teacher. (Rajendra)

These participants were not troubled by their low salaries because they had family support and few obligations. Nevertheless, their low salaries led to a loss of their self-esteem, which had a ripple effect on their overall well-being and made it difficult for them to find the motivation to perform at their full potential. When asked about the social status of contract teachers, Sujata laughed and replied:

> What social status are you talking about? A skilled daily wage worker earns Rs. 400-500 per day. Even if they work for 20 days, they make more than Rs. 8000 per month. We do not even earn that much. I receive a salary of Rs. 7400 per month. After deductions, I am left with Rs. 6500. I do not get this salary regularly. It can be delayed for four months. In the fifth month, they pay you and you discover it is only two months' salary. Again, you wait for months. In such a situation, particularly if you come from an economically struggling family, how can you focus on teaching? (Sujata)

> I believe that the government neglects us. I have not received my salary for the past two months. If you wish to visit the office (BEO office), you must first hand over a hundred rupee note. Then you will be heard. They are all corrupt. And that is just for hearing your plea. In order to resolve issues, they will take even more money. The situation is difficult for me. For the past two months, I have not sent any money to my home. In fact, I had to ask them for money. You call this a job? (Chandan)

The following image (Figure 6.1), shared on the official Twitter handle of the Odisha Junior Teachers' Association illustrates the contrast between the lives of contract teachers and regular teachers. Possibly sketched by a contract teacher, it portrays the precarious living conditions of contract teachers in comparison with those of regular teachers.

Figure 6.1

Contrast between being a contract teacher and a regular teacher

(Source: The official Twitter handle of Odisha Junior Teachers' Association, retrieved on 21 June 2022)

As participants wrestled with financial concerns and uncertainties, it was challenging for them to remain focused and upbeat. However, they persevered, finding solace in talking to each other and discussing their worries. They hoped the government would take note of their plight. By putting their financial concerns aside, they sought to maintain their commitment to their students.

> Here, my colleagues are my friends. We are very familiar with each other's situations. We often discuss our personal problems and try to help each other. Occasionally, we go shopping and eat together. We try to enjoy the little pleasures of life. (Sarojini)

> When we, contract teachers, go on strike, people accuse us of neglecting children's education. I agree that education is hampered during strikes, but how can we get the government to see our suffering? (Mohan)

> I am expected to contribute regularly to the financial needs of my family. We must purchase some land. For our home, we will have to construct a new building. My sisters need to be married. One of them is already married. The remaining two are my responsibility. I do not

allow my financial worries to overwhelm me. How can I make my children happy if I am worried? (Swagat)

6.4.5 Sense of Inferiority

It was evident that many of the participants felt a sense of inferiority because they were not regular teachers. Seema perfectly encapsulated this feeling when she questioned, "*Aame kou gaai ra gobara ki?* Who cares about our side of the story?" Seema used a common saying in Odia that refers to the speaker's marginal position. Essentially, it means: I am a nobody, and I do not deserve special attention or consideration. A recurrent theme in most participants' narratives was the comparison of contract teachers with labourers. Sudhir said:

> For six years I am occupied with only one concern- survival. For six years we are forced to live like labourers. It is a huge amount of mental pressure. They have recruited three teachers with the salary of one. It is easy for them. Is it easy for us? (Sudhir)

> The regular teachers treat us as if we were labourers. Our government has enough money to provide our children with books, uniforms, shoes, and cycles, but not for us. In my opinion, the government believes that we don't even deserve what we are receiving. Only a teacher can live with dignity in such circumstances. (Ranjan)

Sujata too echoed this sentiment when she said, "I don't think bright students are interested in becoming teachers. The salary is low. Even though it is increased after six years, by that time the damage has already been done. Getting less than a labourer hurts one's self-respect."

Sarojini taught in numerous private schools before joining the government school system as a contractual teacher. She recognizes that her school could be improved in so many areas. She, however, feels powerless in school as she is merely a contractual teacher. She said:

> I am just a JT, not even a permanent teacher. What can I do about these things even though I want to do? I can only contribute physical labour. I don't have money. I can encourage children to work with me for the development of the school. I can take a few tiny steps like a *gunduchi musha* (squirrel). But there are people who can make significant changes. The headteacher can work with the cooperation of SMC members and other teachers to develop the school. (Sarojini)

Schools are not the only places where participants feel inferior. Many participants, often men, dislike the idea of identifying themselves as contractual teachers in primary schools. According to Mohan, male contractual teachers are not very attractive as marriage prospects. He said, “Many males choose to become contractual teachers as a second option. It is unlikely that anyone will marry them. With their salaries, they are not able to afford a comfortable life for themselves. How can they support families?”

6.4.6 Anxiety about the possibility of transfer

Before 2012, the Odisha government had a policy of hiring contract teachers through local authorities and from the local pool of applicants. Teachers were able to obtain posts in schools near their homes because of this policy. If a teacher wished to transfer to another school within a district, it was possible and, in many cases, it required bribing local officials. In 2012 and all the recruitments after that, applicants were permitted to apply for vacancies in any district of their choice. Due to this change in policy, teachers from coastal Odisha like Sarojini, Mohan, and Goutam got jobs in a northern district. However, being posted hundreds of kilometres away from their homes, they wished to be transferred. Transfers were sought for a variety of reasons. Sarojini said:

> Teachers who live with their parents or stay somewhere near their homes don’t really understand our problem- the problem of teachers who live far away from their homes. The school needs me here and my family needs me there. From both sides, I can sense equal pressure. You might have seen me today calling my son repeatedly and walking around the field while I spoke with him. It is important for me to know how he is doing and what he is doing. Whenever I learn of bad news, I lose control. Suddenly, I am confused. It is unlikely that I will be able to reach my family in time even if I take leave immediately. Recently, my father-in-law passed away. My mother-in-law is now living alone. If she falls ill, I will not be able to get to her as quickly as I would like. If I had been working close to my home, I would have been able to respond to such emergencies much more efficiently. I could have taken care of my job and family at the same time. Since I'm here, I'm not much help in an emergency. (Sarojini)

Ankita needed a transfer to reduce her non-teaching workload:

> This school is conveniently located. There is a direct bus service from here to my native town. However, I still need to transfer for a different reason. Working in this school entails several additional responsibilities. There is a hostel here. So, one teacher should serve as the hostel superintendent. Then, one teacher is designated as the BLO. Ideally, I would like to work in a school where I can simply go and teach. (Ankita)

Trinath wanted to be transferred to a school near his village because of concerns about his safety:

> Here I work with a bit of fear as this is not my native area. Nowadays, there are many people who drink and just roam around. Anyone can start a fight. Anyone can create a problem from nothing. I try to avoid such people. We may even be beaten by a parent if a child gets into any trouble here. What will we do? In my own area, I will be able to resolve such issues because I will have the support of my parents and acquaintances. I can work freely. I will be able to teach better if I feel safe. (Trinath)

Transfer rules for teachers during the first six years of their employment are not clearly defined by the government. It is evident in participants' confusion regarding the possibility of transfers as well as the procedures involved. Many believed that it is difficult to obtain a transfer to a school of their choice during the first six years of employment. For some, the transfer option was available, but inter-district transfers were unlikely. Therefore, as long as they are not regular teachers, they must stay put. They also mentioned the option of mutual transfer, wherein teachers with the same educational qualifications and social category could exchange positions on a voluntary basis. The difficulty was finding a teacher with similar characteristics who would be willing to relocate.

It is certainly challenging to work in an inconvenient location for six years. This is because not being able to obtain a transfer means that personal matters, such as getting married or becoming a parent, need to be postponed. Due to the intricacies of transfer rules, contract teachers also apply for vacancies in high schools and other positions, which may lead to their posting in more desirable locations. Until a few years ago, contract teachers were regularly transferred, and the

process was often marred by corruption. At least in one respect, the situation appears to have improved, as most participants reported that political connections and bribery would not be helpful in getting a transfer. However, it also means that all roads are now closed.

6.4.7 Fractured solidarity

According to several scholars, the creation of multiple cadres of teachers is not only inefficient on the part of the administration, but also undermines the professionalism of the teaching workforce (Kaushik *et al.*, 2009; Jha, Minni and Ahmed, 2021). It is reasonable to suspect that regular teachers may discriminate against contract teachers owing to the differences in their employment terms. When asked about this, none of the participants shared any first-hand experience of discrimination. However, some participants felt that they were given more non-teaching work since they were new to the school. Also, they shared instances of discrimination experienced by their friends in other schools. Rajendra noted:

> Regular teachers discriminate against us when we attend block-level teacher meetings. They make us feel inferior through their behaviour. Recently, the middle school in the neighbouring village was merged with the high school. Both schools were adjacent to one another and had different head teachers. The head teacher of the high school now supervises everything. All the tedious paperwork is assigned to middle school teachers, all of whom are contract teachers. In fact, they sit in two separate staff rooms. When it comes to taking leaves, contract teachers have more difficulties than regular teachers. (Rajendra)

Although many participants were ambiguous regarding discrimination against contract teachers in schools, they did believe that contractual employment is a form of 'othering' that causes teachers to adopt an "us versus them" attitude. Contractual employment prevented participants from asserting that they were equal members of the teaching community. As mentioned before they regarded themselves as severely underpaid, almost exploited and frequently neglected employees of the government. The regular teachers, on the other hand, symbolised the opposite. They were seen as government employees who were fairly treated

and valued. This created a feeling of resentment among contractual teachers. Nevertheless, the interview data do not provide much insight into whether it contributed to a climate of distrust and tension between the two groups of teachers in schools.

In Nivedita's opinion, it is not the regular teachers but rather the government that is creating rifts within the teacher community and treating different cadres of teachers differently. Therefore, regular teachers need not be held responsible for discriminatory behaviour.

> I have never felt discriminated against as a *Sikhya Sahayak* (SS). SS teachers perform all the duties that are performed by regular teachers. The salary of our HM is seven times that of mine. He is equivalent to seven SS teachers like me. However, I perform as much work as he does. It makes me sad. We are also usually assigned more work because we are junior teachers. If we are not subject to discrimination, why are we paid so little for the same work? While the government has this attitude, our colleagues do not. (Nivedita)

6.4.8 Being a female teacher

Data from 2021-22 indicate that approximately 44% of government school teachers are female (UDISE+, 2022). The proportion of female teachers in government schools in Odisha is also 44% (UDISE+, 2022). Teaching has often been perceived as a preferred profession for women in India and abroad. In countries like the USA where a majority of teachers have been women for well over a century, teaching is typically viewed as women's work (Spencer, 1997). It is sometimes argued that the over-feminisation of teaching has led to a decline in the status of the teaching profession (Spencer, 1997). Regardless, there is a high probability that in the near future there will be more female teachers in Indian government schools than male teachers. The female participants in this study all agreed that females are increasingly interested in becoming teachers. One of the main reasons for this preference is that teaching allows them to balance a professional life with a family life.

> Even when a woman holds a job, she must take care of her family. As a teacher, you have sufficient time to take care of your family. In other jobs, you spend a great deal of time in your office. That is the reason why most girls choose to pursue a career in teaching. There is also the

> fact that females are more affectionate towards children. They can take good care of children. (Ankita)

> Nowadays, female students are scoring higher than male students. Typically, boys are more inclined to study engineering. Girls prepare for B.Ed/CT. Girls believe that teaching will allow them to devote enough time to their families. Work is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and then you are free to spend time with your family. Therefore, we see a greater number of females becoming teachers. (Seema)

> See, females think teaching is the safest job for them. They can do their job and look after their families without much problem. You can bring your own child with you if there is no one at home to take care of him/her. There are many holidays as well. Some female teachers do not wish to teach sincerely. They can also survive in this system. (Sujata)

In this context, the question is whether government schools are safe and welcoming environments for female teachers? According to the findings of this study, female teachers in government schools can experience dissatisfaction for at least three reasons. First, non-teaching work can be more inconvenient for female teachers than for male teachers. Manisha, for example, dreads being assigned the BLO responsibility.

> I would not be afraid to assume BLO responsibility if I were a male. Being a female, I am not interested in taking on this type of responsibility. I may consider this after my marriage. In the event that I am given the BLO charge, I will be required to attend meetings in the block office and will not be able to return until well after sunset. Somebody has to be there with me to ensure my safety. We are always under pressure to take on that responsibility. I will be doomed if my name is suggested. Due to this anxiety, I am considering transferring. Male teachers don't have safety concerns. They can stay late in the evening and travel to wherever they are directed. (Manisha)

In the contemporary government school system, teachers' work extends beyond the boundaries of the school campus. Participants observed that teachers in government schools must travel frequently over short distances as part of their work. Nivedita held that male teachers had more mobility options than female teachers.

> In a school, it is not good when all teachers are female. Teachers are frequently required to go here and there for official purposes. When none of the teachers knows how to drive or owns a

> personal vehicle, they must coax someone to drive them or go out and get things done. Occasionally, they must hire autorickshaws, which is an expensive option. Therefore, a male teacher should be posted in every school. (Nivedita)

Second, there may be dissatisfaction among female teachers about the way male teachers perceive their commitment and efficiency. There were some male participants who accused female teachers of negligence, and some female participants who levelled counteraccusations while denying the charges levelled against them.

> It is rare for young boys to 'aim' to become teachers. Before opting for teacher training, they try everything. Even after training, they prepare and apply for other vacancies. There have been a few SS teachers who quit their jobs when they received better employment opportunities. Conversely, for most female teachers, teaching is both their first and last aspiration. They want to stay near their homes and work as few hours as possible. They don't think about systemic issues in their profession. Their only concern is how they can arrive at school late and leave early. Even when they are at school, they spend a great deal of time on their cell phones. Generally, schools with more female teachers perform poorly. (Mohan)

> In some schools, all teachers are male. Assume that there are six teachers for eight grades. It is common for children to fear and obey male teachers. Therefore, three of them are capable of handling eight grades without difficulty. The other three can remain absent. They can do this alternatively. I have seen male teachers who operate in this manner. They attend school only three days a week. In this regard, the presence of more females in the teaching profession is a positive development. (Sujata)

> There is no doubt that a female teacher is better able to understand a child than a male teacher. Like a mother, she has a higher tolerance level. She is capable of teaching and caring for children in a very effective manner. There is a need for more female teachers at the primary level. The claim that female teachers only gossip and neglect their duties is completely untrue. In contrast, many male teachers spend much of their time outside of school and neglect their teaching duties. (Laxmipriya)

> Most female teachers spend their entire day at school. We do not roam around during school hours even when we have a vehicle. However, when it comes to male teachers, they simply leave campus whenever some work needs to be done outside. So, I think more girls should join this profession. (Seema)

As Nivedita opined that schools needed male teachers for work involving travel, some male teachers stated that female teachers are required in schools, if for no other reason than to address female students' issues. Prakash, whose school had two male teachers including himself commented, “Even in primary schools, there should be at least one female teacher for looking after girls.” Interestingly, no male teacher felt embarrassed about being in a “women's profession.” The same is true for female teachers too. The way Manisha put it, “As a female, I don’t regret being a teacher. I don’t see male teachers getting any advantages because of their gender.”

Third, a few female teachers stated that they were victims of harassment. It was not their male colleagues who harassed them, but rather the communities they served. Ankita remarked:

> People don't hesitate to shout at me since I am a female. Some situations can be better handled by a male teacher than by a female teacher. When all teachers in a school are male, villagers do not dare enter the school premises. In contrast, when all teachers are female, as in this school, they come here for all sorts of trivial reasons and request *chaandaa* (donations) at every opportunity. Our reputation is also subject to their gossip. (Ankita)

Manisha recounted a critical incident that exposed her vulnerability as a female teacher. When that incident occurred, there were four teachers in her school and all were females. In the course of one fine day at school, a student who had come to school went missing. As soon as the head teacher received the information, the student's father was informed. When the student did not return home after sunset, a search operation was initiated. With her husband by her side, the head teacher began searching for the child. The next day, a missing report was filed at the police station. The head teacher became so distressed that she sought advice from mystics, people who were know for predicting the location of a lost person or item and whether it would be found. School Management Committee members were informed about the issue after two days and complained why they had not been notified immediately. In their view, if they had been informed immediately, they could have found the child. They made a big deal out of the

matter. Everyone, including the missing student's father, accused the teachers of negligence. After ten days, officials from the block education office visited the school and the head teacher was suspended.

> People threatened us: let the officers leave, we will see you later. As soon as the officers left, the lock-up drama began. Outside we were confronted by a large crowd of people who began shouting and cursing at us. We remained locked up until 7 p.m. It was getting late and we were hungry. I was so depressed that I regretted being a teacher. I was in tears. The following day, I became ill. The husband of our head teacher came in his car and pulled us all out of here. A day later, the child returned. The villagers demanded our removal and replacement with new teachers. For approximately six months, three of us managed the school. Following that, two male teachers joined. At night, people easily come into the campus to consume alcohol. Villagers do nothing to address this issue. However, when something bad occurs, they are quick to blame us. If we were male, they would not have dared to lock us up and humiliate us. (Manisha)

6.4.9 The desire for course correction

As discussed in the previous chapter, many participants had decided to pursue teacher training and join the teaching workforce as contract teachers because they were unable to pursue their preferred career paths. For instance, Prakash achieved a good ranking in the entrance examination for engineering schools. Due to his family's financial difficulties, he was uncertain whether he would be able to arrange funds for three years of study in engineering. On the other hand, teacher training was less expensive and shorter in duration. Therefore, he abandoned the idea of studying engineering and enrolled in a teacher training program instead. According to Lortie (1975), this is a case of 'constrained entry'. For teachers such as Prakash, the position of contract teacher represents a stepping stone. As participants worked through their contractual service, they studied and prepared for better-paying government jobs. As with unemployed youth, they were still in 'preparation mode'. Rather than teaching in private tuition classes and earning an additional income, some participants preferred to use their evenings to prepare for

job examinations. If they had been offered regular positions with a decent salary, they might have accepted teaching as their career and strived to improve themselves as teachers.

It is also apparent that the female participants who became teachers out of their passion were rethinking their career choices. The following statement illustrates Manisha's confusion.

> Nowadays, people prefer to work in banks. A banking career has never been of interest to me. I wanted to become a teacher. But, am I really able to teach here? Most of the time I am engaged in paperwork. And what do I receive as a salary? Perhaps I should consider joining the administrative services. (Manisha)

However, course correction was not a concern for all participants. Ankita began teaching shortly after her marriage. Changing careers was not an option for her because her family considered teaching as the only suitable work for married women. Similarly, Sujata did not want to rock the boat because her husband changed his job to be with her. With regard to course correction, teachers like Ankita and Sujata had only one option- to obtain teaching positions in nearby high schools. If participants were offered a higher paying permanent position in their preferred location, it is difficult to imagine that any of them would still choose to continue as a contract teacher.

6.5 Conclusion

An analysis of participants' dissatisfactions and satisfactions associated with their employment as contract teachers in government elementary schools was presented in this chapter. Compared to the list of satisfactions, the list of dissatisfactions was considerably longer. Participants described their regrets and pain as contract teachers. For many participants, maintaining the social identity as government schoolteachers was a source of suffering and failed to provide a sufficient sense of self-worth because of the contractual nature of their appointment.

The relocation process marked the beginning of the difficult and compromising choices that they would have to make over the next six years because of their low salaries. Their initial

challenges included finding cheap and safe accommodations and transportation facilities. Over time, they became aware of the expected and unexpected satisfactions and dissatisfactions associated with their employment. The satisfactions included positive relationships with colleagues and the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues. Teachers assigned to schools where grade eight existed found it exciting to teach those students. Teaching students in grade eight allowed them to experience what it would have been like if they were teaching in high school, one of their unfulfilled ambitions. Many were pleased with the opportunity to exercise autonomy in the classroom. They appreciated the availability of guidebooks and training for them. However, they did not feel constrained by these and acted on their own judgment of what was practical in their contexts and necessary for their students. Only one participant was satisfied with his students because most of his students had grade-specific learning and were prepared for what he had to teach.

The list of dissatisfactions participants encountered during their initial years of employment is longer than the list of satisfactions. Many complained about the inadequate school resources and infrastructure. Their students' parents did not meet their expectations. Parents did not complement their efforts and were unconcerned with their children's education. Some teachers felt overburdened with non-teaching workload and no longer felt like teachers. Living off their low income was probably the most challenging aspect of participants' lives. The salary was not just inadequate to make the ends meet, but irregular as well. The salary issues did not significantly affect those who lived with their parents or husbands. The most troubled participants were married males and those who lived away from their families. They resorted to several means to survive, including borrowing from friends, seeking aid from parents, purchasing items on credit, and supplementing their income by offering private tuition. There was no way for them to save or make planned expenditures. Due to their contractual status, most teachers felt inferior. In their opinion, their salaries were lower than the wages of laborers.

The extent of their non-teaching duties rendered them multi-purpose government employees rather than teachers. Some were concerned about transfers to better or preferred schools. Nevertheless, the data indicate that they were uncertain regarding how the transfer system worked and pessimistic about the likelihood of receiving a transfer to the locations they desired. Several participants reported being discriminated against by regular teachers. Due to the contractual recruitment policy, they did not feel like equal members of the professional community. Younger participants were disenchanted with their current jobs and preparing for a new career. It was disappointing to have worked all the way through to become a teacher and then felt the need to make course corrections. Lastly, being a female teacher can pose several challenges. According to some female participants, locals could easily harass them, while male teachers felt that female teachers were often negligent. Additionally, since most female teachers did not possess personal vehicles, they dreaded non-teaching work that required frequent travel. Participants differed in the extent to which these dissatisfactions impacted their lives.

The thematic analysis of interview data revealed that the lives of teachers in the contract period are structured around themes like precedence of non-teaching work over teaching, financial hardships and uncertainties, sense of inferiority, anxiety over transfer, experiences of discrimination and planning for course correction. It can be argued that these subthemes together signal precarity in the lives of contract teachers. Precarity here is evidently due to "manufactured uncertainty" (Alberti et al., 2018). While it is rare for a teacher's contract to be not renewed, the threat of dismissal is real. Managerial strategies such as withholding salary payments have contributed to the subjective precariousness of teachers.

However, following Gilmartin et al. (2021), we can characterize the participant's case as one of "promising precarity" because the opportunity to secure a stable, well-paying position is available after six years of precarious contractual employment. The promise of gaining

permanent government employment motivated participants to remain engaged. There are, however, some disadvantages associated with their position that are unrelated to their contractual status, such as the lack of infrastructure and resources in primary schools, the lack of parental support for their children's education, and the negative attitude towards female teachers. Even regular teachers may find these aspects of their work frustrating. Participants who found their position unbearable and unredeemable even as regular teachers sought other employment opportunities. While the dissatisfactions outnumbered the satisfactions, many participants concluded that a better future justified enduring the downsides. However, coping with the downsides and making life more manageable necessitates a detailed discussion, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Thriving as a contract teacher

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the participants in this study evaluated whether their jobs were worth investing in. While they identified several dissatisfactions with their jobs, most of them, if not all, decided to persist. For many, this was the only option available. Furthermore, there was the promise of becoming a regular teacher, which they believed would alleviate many of their concerns. This chapter examines the final moment of the dialectic between the personal identity and social identity of participants. This moment is characterised by the synthesis between the two (Archer, 2000). Once a satisfying role has been found, the question arises, 'how much of myself am I willing to invest in it? People often occupy multiple social roles which can be demanding in terms of time, energy, and commitment. In the third moment, people decide how to strike a balance. Social identity occupies a significant place in the life of a person who considers it an adequate source of self-worth. However, as Archer points out, there is no guarantee that social concerns will be a priority, and while a person may devote long hours to their work, this does not necessarily imply enthusiasm for the work (Archer, 2000). Enthusiasm is reflected in the way people personify their roles. Social actors are 'active role-makers rather than passive role-takers' (Archer, 1995, p. 280). By actively personifying their roles, rather than merely fulfilling minimum expectations, people express their personal identities through their social identities.

Following Archer's theoretical insights, this chapter explores how contract teachers involved themselves in their work as contract teachers of elementary schools. It focuses on their strategies for coping with the risks of their positions, their personification of their work, their sources of self-worth, and how their career concerns are intertwined with their personal concerns. Briefly put the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how a contract teacher

confronting several disadvantages can develop a manageable, even though not necessarily desirable, modus vivendi.

7.1 Overcoming fear and developing self-confidence

In the previous chapter, it was noted that some participants regarded teaching as a risky occupation, and contractual recruitment only exacerbates that risk. Teachers have to ensure students' safety, complete non-teaching assignments on time and as required, teach students and improve their learning outcomes, and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with parents, colleagues, and officials in the district and block education offices. Before a few years ago, teachers had to maintain favourable relations with local political elites, as dissatisfied politicians could make teachers' lives miserable. In the following excerpts from interviews, participants describe their perception of risks associated with their jobs.

> Being a teacher in a government school is certainly a risky undertaking. Here, everything depends on the teacher. If something goes wrong, we will be held responsible. Recently, I read in the newspaper that a child died from a snake bite. The teachers were blamed. So, it’s risky being a teacher. But someone must take that risk. (Mohan)

> CRCCs usually visit schools. It is also common for ABEOs, BEOs, and even DEOs to visit schools. If the children fail to respond satisfactorily to questions posed by a visitor, the headmaster will be reprimanded first, followed by the teachers. (Sujata)

> Teacher misconduct, regardless of how trivial, may result in punishment. Consider the case of reopening the school after Durga Puja vacation. On the first day after vacation, children usually do not attend school. However, the teacher must come and stay at school for the entire day. An incident occurred last year at a nearby school. On the day of the school's re-opening, only 6-7 children were present. The school had only one teacher. He decided to send the children back and close the school. The DEO visited the school that day and found it closed. The teacher was not paid for the next three to four months as a punishment. The officials may issue similar punishments if a teacher leaves school early or if irregularities are detected in MDM. (Sudhir)

> It is very risky to be a teacher today. You must ensure the safety of the children. They should not fight and cause physical harm to one another. You can see that this student is heading to the toilet. Two more would follow him. They would assist him in carrying the bucket. They will all return together. This is the procedure here. We have to ensure that students stay inside the school campus all day but we can't lock the gate. The officers will be outraged if they find the gate locked during their surprise visit. Now that the gates are always open, any drunken villager can come inside and create disturbances. One teacher in a nearby school was dismissed because a journalist entered the school and published something about the school which irked the administrators. (Ankita)

> Previously, only the most motivated children studied. Teachers paid scanty attention to the children. Now you must care for all the children. If you neglect any children, action will be taken against you. Every once in a while, higher authorities issue different orders. It is the responsibility of the teachers to follow them. If you question the orders, you are asking for trouble. It is mandatory to attend training. If a teacher refuses to attend, he will be contacted immediately by higher officials. The BEO would inquire about the absence. He would ask, "What do you think you are? Do you think you already know everything? If that is the case, why don't you come down and train others?" (Prakash)

The participants preferred to be safe rather than sorry as contract teachers working in government primary schools. Seema summarized the modus operandi of teachers by referring to an Odia saying: *'Haate maapi chaakhande chaala.'* This proverb advises caution, as does the English proverb 'Measure a thousand times; cut once.' For participants, a constant state of caution was crucial for dealing with risks, overcoming fears, and developing confidence. Staying vigilant and alert allowed them to anticipate and address potential dangers. This helped them remain calm and composed in difficult situations. It also gave them a sense of control.

Within the first week of fieldwork, I discerned teachers' cautious attitudes. Considering that no participant had ever participated in a research study or survey, they viewed me as a potential threat and hesitated to share their experiences with me. I had to elaborate on my research, my views on teachers and teaching, my institution and even my personal

background to develop trust and rapport. As I entered a school one morning, I found that only one of the two teachers of that school was present. I presented the teacher with the permission letter from the DEO and explained the purpose of my visit. Unconvinced, she requested that I leave the campus and return when the head teacher would be present.

In an effort to be cautious, participants endeavoured to perform well, become familiar with a variety of assignments, maintain a learning attitude and instil confidence in their students to face questions from visitors. Manisha said:

> There are many things that teachers fear. As my colleague says, if you are doing your duty, then banish fear from your heart. Working sincerely will ensure that you will never face any difficulties. Until now, I have not encountered any problems regardless of who visits my school. I have always tried to do my best in everything I do. (Manisha)

Trinath considered taking on non-teaching responsibilities on his own to become familiar with and prepare for the wide range of responsibilities entrusted to teachers.

> Initially, I was not assigned many non-teaching duties. The HM used to take care of these matters. I had no idea that teachers are expected to do so many things in addition to teaching. A year and a half after joining, I began assisting other teachers in various non-teaching tasks to learn more about them. Nobody pressured me. (Trinath)

In addition, some participants noted that fostering a learning culture requires a supportive work environment and helpful colleagues. For example, Sourav said:

> A teacher's level of confidence depends greatly upon his or her working environment and the people he or she is working with. When a person acquires a lot of knowledge while working, he or she will gain confidence in a short period of time. I have seen regular teachers who lack confidence despite having worked for many years. They are often under-informed about rules and regulations and lack support from their colleagues. (Saurav)

Coordination among teachers, particularly in matters of taking leave and managing Casual Leaves (CL) is also a means of alleviating fears.

> I have never experienced fear in my professional life. I am not afraid of school visitors. I don’t neglect my duties. Then why should I be afraid? If I want to save a CL when I visit my family, I leave an application at school. Whenever possible, I try to arrive at school on time to

save my CL. Even if I arrive late, my attendance will be accepted, and a CL will be saved. Any officer who visits school during my absence will be informed by other teachers that I am on casual leave. There is nothing to fear. (Sarojini)

According to Sudhir, teachers can also act confidently when students are smart and knowledgeable.

> Sometimes the CRCC sits in my class and observes while I teach. Nowadays I am not afraid of such visits. I am now familiar with everything. I have learned how to 'manage' officers and parents. Therefore, I no longer fear them. The DPC visited our school once. I didn't know that the visitor was the DPC. He walked straight to the classroom. At that time, I was with the cooks in the storeroom. My students answered all his questions. After a few minutes, I returned to the classroom, and he inquired about the lesson plan I had prepared. I showed him my lesson plan. Since I was not in the classroom when he arrived, he inquired as to where I was. In response, I stated that I was in the storeroom to attend to something urgent regarding MDM. Before I could finish explaining, my students provided a more thorough response. There was no need for me to say anything further. He ended the conversation and departed. Both teachers and students are empowered by each other. Had my students fumbled or not supported my response that day, the DPC would have suspected my words and actions and insulted me without hesitation. (Sudhir)

Participants' confidence also hinged upon their ability to both accept and reject the category of 'contract teacher' in strategic ways. Sarojini, who had a decade of teaching experience before becoming a contract teacher, decided to "act like a novice" at least in the presence of visiting officers. Although she no longer felt the need to seek advice, she listened patiently to all the suggestions that were given to her. Without arguing her own position, she humbly accepted criticism. Her behaviour was in line with what was expected of a young contract teacher. For Sujata, on the other hand, it was important that she did not behave in a manner typical of a young contract teacher. She learned to stand her ground while still respecting the people around her.

> As the youngest teacher, I initially felt discriminated against. When I am busy teaching, they would ask me to do some stupid paperwork. Initially, I obeyed all orders. In the ensuing days, I realized that if I continued to obey such orders, my workload would disproportionately increase. The other teachers would teach and relax while I would worry about completing my

> paperwork. After a few days, I expressed my concern. You will be taken for granted as long as you do not complain. (Sujata)

7.2 Prioritising non-teaching work over teaching

According to the data, some participants placed a higher priority on non-teaching work than on teaching. They believed that neglecting their non-teaching activities might have greater detrimental effects than neglecting their teaching activities. As Manisha said, 'If we don't teach well, we will not face any trouble. However, if anything goes wrong in our non-teaching duties, we will be immediately suspended.' One explanation for this belief is the fact that school administrators generally focus on the non-academic aspects of schools on their school visits. The block and district education officers usually review registers and records, observe the operation of the midday meal program, and evaluate the cleanliness of school facilities. Furthermore, although regular teachers may experience similar pressures with respect to non-teaching workloads, contract teachers are the ones who feel vulnerable, because their jobs are insecure, and administrators can easily take disciplinary action against them. According to some participants, contract teachers are usually assigned most of the non-teaching duties because they are the most junior teachers and are less likely to voice for a fair distribution of responsibilities.

Several participants narrated stories that circulated in the local teacher community concerning contract teachers who had been punished for matters related to non-teaching duties. Typically, the punishment consisted of a suspension of salary for a few months. The participants who spent most of their time working on non-teaching tasks hoped that once they became regular teachers, their workload would be reduced. At least, as regular teachers, they hope, their position would be secure enough to provide strategic flexibility to cope with the demands of non-teaching work.

7.3 Managing emotions

Participants agreed that managing their emotions would enable them to have a more enjoyable time at work. The first step in managing emotions is identifying the emotions that require managing. Most participants mentioned anger, frustration and boredom as the most dominant emotions in their work lives. There are both typical and unique reasons that can cause teachers to experience negative emotions. A teacher's temper often flares when students create a nuisance and disregard reprimands. Other reasons include:

> I feel angry when I am teaching, and I am asked to do something else immediately. (Ranjan)

> During the summer vacation last year, the education department kept changing the date of school reopening. In less than a week, I travelled four times back and forth between home and school. This made me angry. They can't just stick to a plan. They do not respect our time and don't take into consideration our pain. (Trinath)

> In the second half of the day, I often observe that students are not in a receiving mode. Even when I try to teach something important during those hours, they sometimes do not pay attention. That makes me angry. (Chandan)

Teacher frustration is often induced by students who do not learn despite repeated attempts on the part of the teacher.

> I get frustrated when I expect a child to be able to learn something and put in extra effort to teach him that, but he fails to answer the question in the examination. No matter how much you teach, you get zero output. That’s irritating. (Ankita)

The feeling of boredom experienced by teachers is typically associated with non-teaching tasks and working in the absence of students in schools. For instance, Sujata stated:

> The non-academic tasks, such as preparing reports, maintaining records, and calculating numbers (how many uniforms were received, how many students received their uniforms, collecting their signatures, etc.) are tedious and boring. We really need clerical staff. (Sujata)

> Sometimes teachers are asked to be present when schools are closed for children. In the first few days of summer vacation, we need to be present. Those kinds of days are my least favourite. Without students, school is boring. (Sourav)

> When students do not attend school, such as on a rainy day, I become bored. When children are on vacation, but we must report to work, which typically happens during the first few days of summer vacation, I do not feel energetic. When I am around children, I never feel bored at all. (Laxmipriya)

> Disobedient children make me angry. When we are assigned work that we do not want to do, I feel irritated. A recent example is the household survey. In times when my family needs me and I am also required to attend school, I am frustrated. In such situations, I regret my decision to become a teacher. I feel like quitting. (Sarojini)

According to most participants that teachers must control their anger and be able to focus on non-teaching tasks even when the tasks are boring. In their view, kindness, patience, and integrity are key characteristics of a good teacher according to Indian culture. In their efforts to become better teachers, they claimed they deliberately sought to cultivate these qualities.

7.4 Personification

While the new discursive regime considers the only task of the teachers is to implement the curriculum as prescribed and produce high learning outcomes, the participating teachers did not perceive their role in such a narrow fashion. As active role-makers, instead of being role-takers, they personified their roles in different ways so that their personal identity could be expressed through their social identity. For example, Sarojini, who taught in private schools for many years, said:

> In private schools, I have seen children singing songs and telling stories and making several gestures while communicating. We discuss these things here. We know that these activities make children smart and confident. Why can't our students do all of these? They are not different from children going to private schools. They come from underprivileged backgrounds. Their parents cannot afford private education. But that's it. The senior teachers here do not pay much attention to students' personality development. But, we the new ones, strongly believe that our children should learn to sing, act and speak confidently. So, our teaching is more activity oriented. (Sarojini)

Sarojini's emphasis on activity-based learning was indicative of her concern for the holistic development of her students. She challenged the widely held notion that the holistic development of children was possible in private schools only. She did not consider her students or colleagues inferior to private school students and teachers. It was evident that her efforts to personify her role as a teacher reflected her personal identity - her past experiences and her unique concerns.

Similarly, Mohan's focus was on ensuring the cleanliness and hygiene of his students.

> The first thing I noticed was that the children wore dirty, soiled clothing. They were not careful about maintaining their personal hygiene. In the classrooms, there was a very unpleasant odour. I realised that no one had taught them the value of a clean environment and personal hygiene. When private school students can maintain their own personal hygiene, this is absolutely possible for our students as well. I started talking about cleanliness all the time. I can see the difference now. As long as I am here, I will ensure that everyone maintains good hygiene standards. (Mohan)

Another area of interest through which some participants personified their roles was gardening. They led gardening activities and encouraged students to become involved in gardening.

Many participants opined that they strived to personify their roles as teachers by modelling themselves after their ideal teachers. In most cases, their ideal teachers were either their own teachers who taught them in school or their parents who were teachers. Some imagined an idealised picture of teachers from previous generations. The ideal teacher for one participant was a teacher who had served as a trainer for one of his in-service training programs. The participants attempted to emulate the enthusiasm, dedication, behaviour, and skills of their ideal teacher. They hoped to inspire their students in the same way they were inspired by their ideal teachers. The following quotes provide evidence for these inferences.

> In my opinion, a good teacher should be punctual. She should be well-behaved, polite, and loving. She must have a deep affection for children. My father was a teacher, and I have

observed these qualities in him. I will be very happy if I can develop these qualities myself. (Laxmipriya)

A good teacher should possess several qualities. Teaching well is only one of them. She should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of her students. Any person who has knowledge of the subject matter can teach. A good teacher, however, works according to her own assessment of students' needs and abilities. She has to continuously evaluate their progress. She must instil discipline in her students. A good teacher must ensure that students learn the value of cleanliness. She must identify leadership abilities and encourage them to become leaders. A good teacher is responsible for the integral development of a child. It is not just about teaching, but about the overall development of the child. Many teachers from the previous generation could be considered ideal teachers since they could easily accomplish all these tasks. (Seema)

Prakash recalled that he was a poorly performing student up until the sixth grade. He came into contact with a teacher in grade seven who had a profound impact on his life. He beat Prakash a lot, however, he was able to explain things in a manner that Prakash could understand and remember. More than passing the examinations, he focused on teaching Prakash the art of learning. In Prakash's opinion, his teaching reflects the influence of that teacher.

One of the things I learned from that teacher is that jokes and stories can be used to enhance the teaching process. When introducing a new topic, I begin by discussing some related topics that children are already familiar with. I will begin by telling a story about trees if I need to teach about trees. That will pique their interest. After that, I will discuss the parts of trees, such as flowers, fruit, roots, etc. I give many examples. I do not begin by reading the book. Storytelling will be the focus of the first day. I may bring a plant or a model of a plant to the classroom the following day. Only when students are interested in the subject matter can teaching be successful. (Prakash)

When Chandan was a student, he participated in numerous competitions and won many prizes. As a teacher, he expected the same from his students.

My goal is to encourage them to participate in various competitions that are held at other schools. I would like to see them win prizes. I prepare my students for various competitions. During the competition, I try to learn about the judges and make sure that they are being fair

to the contestants. If I consider anything unfair, I question it. I ensure that there is no partiality. I also advocate on behalf of deserving students from other schools. (Chandan)

Mohan proudly shared that his son was a student at his school. He asked, 'How would people trust that we are teaching well if I did not allow him to study here?' In a sense, he was implying that he was the kind of government schoolteacher who was confident enough in government schools to enrol his child in one. This can be viewed as a means of personification, which distinguished him from other government school teachers.

7.5 Preparing for promotion

The vertical mobility of schoolteachers is limited in many countries. Thus, the teaching profession is regarded as unsuitable for the ambitious careerist (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986). According to the data collected in this study, neither the participants were sufficiently knowledgeable about how the promotion system works, nor were they enthusiastic about the prospect of being promoted. While the lack of enthusiasm can be attributed to participants' lack of awareness of how promotions work, the excessively complex and competitive nature of the promotion system also contributes to low enthusiasm.

> I am not familiar with the promotion process for teachers. (Laxmipriya)

> A teacher joins as a JTC and becomes a JT three years after joining. After another three years, she becomes an assistant teacher. Afterwards, there are levels: 3,4,5, etc. I have no idea how promotions work. (Nivedita)

> Both of my parents were teachers. I am a government teacher myself. Even then, I am unaware of how the promotion system operates. There are gradations, salary components etc. I just know that I have joined as a JTC and will become a JT. After six years I will become a regular teacher. I have not yet considered what happens after that. To begin with, there are not many ladders to climb and, secondly, I have observed many teachers waiting for many years to be promoted. Considering all this, why bother? (Sujata)

> I have some idea of the promotion system in our profession. In our school the HM is a level 4 teacher. In ME schools the HMs are level 3 teachers. ABEO, BEO etc. are level 2 teachers. If

> our HM receives promotion, he will be a level 3 teacher and a HM in some ME school. To be considered for promotion, I will need to earn a B.Ed. degree. At the very least, I hope to become an ABEO. A teacher from the general category should not expect to reach the level of BEO. Promotions will not occur so quickly. Before I reach that point, I will retire. Even after recruitment, the competition does not cease. (Manisha)

> I am not sure how government teachers are promoted. After three years as a JTC, you become a JT. Six years after joining, you become a regular teacher. After that, the salary increases every year, according to what I have heard. With qualifications such as a graduate degree and a bachelor's degree in education, you will be considered for administrative positions like CRCC, ABEO and BEO. I am enrolled in a bachelor's programme in distance mode. In the same way I will get a B.Ed. certificate too. My goal is to become a HM one day. I think it takes about 10 years to be a HM. I am not sure about it. As time goes on, I will see if I am capable of handling duties associated with positions higher than that. A teacher may aspire to become a DEO or a DPC. (Sourav)

Although unaware of promotion opportunities, many participants reported enrolling in open universities to pursue bachelor's, master's, and bachelor's degrees in education to qualify for promotion. Participants like Sarojini and Mohan became government schoolteachers at a later stage in their lives. As they saw it, the promotion system was not favourable to them as they did not have enough time to move up the ladder. They questioned why promotions should be based solely on seniority.

> At the age of 40, I joined the government service. In terms of a career, it is too late to dream big. I would be glad to take on any good responsibilities. I don't want to work in administration, become CRCC, etc. I want to teach. I am interested in serving as a resource person for teacher training. I would have liked to be an HM, but due to my age, that promotion is not possible. I've already got an attitude like a HM. (Sarojini)

> If a teacher is sincere, he should be recognized for his efforts. Currently, there is no such system in place. The government promotes teachers based on seniority. I do not have enough time for promotion, but I have quality. Teachers like me should be identified and rewarded or given promotion. After a certain number of years of service, a teacher is promoted even if she has been lazy and negligent. Here I dedicate all my efforts to my students' improvement. My dedication will not be treated differently. I too have to wait for years for a promotion. (Mohan)

7.6 Deriving self-worth

As discussed in the previous chapter, participants considered their salaries as contract teachers and their position within the educational system to be insulting and unfair. Frequently, they compared themselves with daily wage laborers. Nonetheless, the data suggest that they derived self-worth at least from two sources. The first was their relationships with students, which they found rewarding and fulfilling. They perceived themselves as professionals who were well acquainted with the children they taught. Although every stakeholder in the education system has an answer to the proverbial question "why Johnny cannot read or write," only Johnny's teacher can justifiably claim to provide the most comprehensive explanation of Johnny's educational problems. All the participants claimed to have adequate knowledge of their students and thus felt somewhat successful in their mission as teachers. They felt a sense of pride in contributing to the well-being of their students. In the following quotes, participants discussed how their work allowed them to create meaningful connections with their students and make a positive impact on their lives. Even as contract teachers, they felt valued.

According to Manisha and Swagat, teachers' understanding of students was one of their greatest assets.

> Anybody can follow the instructions available in the teaching manual and teach, but we understand our students. We know their learning levels. We know how they will learn and at what pace. I have 29 students in my class, and I can see 29 different levels of learning abilities. If a child can easily understand concepts of civics, you cannot claim that he will have similar competency in solving maths problems. (Manisha)

> I can tell when a child fails to learn something. I observe them closely every day. When I conduct monthly tests, I can tell you beforehand which child will not be able to answer. You can infer how a child is doing in school from test scores. But I can tell you why the child is doing well or poorly. (Swagat)

Participants also narrated their experiences of success with students, experiences in which they had adopted unique approaches for particular students. Sujata, the only teacher in her school with a postgraduate degree in science, was the class teacher in eighth grade. She shared her success with a student who everyone thought 'hated' studying. She had vivid memories of how this boy behaved in the first few days in her class.

> I do not know what he was expecting from me, but I knew he did not even have basic mathematical skills. Those days I was helping students revise things they had learnt in the previous academic year. For the first 2–3 days, I did not ask him to do anything particularly. I just observed him. He observed that all the other students were busy. They were asking me questions and completing their lessons. One day, suddenly, he approached me with a numerical problem. By not forcing him to pay attention to his studies from day one, I let him decide whether he wanted to engage. I had managed to win his trust. He swiftly learned a lot in the next few days. Every day he would come to me with his worksheets, and I would guide him to solve problems. I was thrilled to see his progress. (Sujata)

Although rare and less dramatic, examples like this were offered by most teachers. These success stories constituted a major source of motivation and validation for teachers. None of the participants mentioned getting positive feedback as their source of self-esteem. Instead, most felt happy because they did not receive any harsh feedback on their teaching. They seemed to assume that the absence of direct criticism was an indicator of their effectiveness.

> The parents and guardians are the actual judges. It does not matter whether I feel confident. But I think I am doing alright. I believe the parents are happy with me. When students show disinterest and when they seem bored, I go back and reflect on my teaching. (Goutam)

The participants found value in their everyday interactions with students. They viewed their work with children as a social service and a contribution to the nation. It gave them a sense of responsibility and purpose.

> No matter which family background a child comes from, we must treat them equally. I am striving to meet the expectations of the parents. There is a student here from the ST community whose father serves as chairman of the SMC. I would be very upset if the chairman asked me about his child and I could not provide a satisfactory response. Parents

frequently inquire about their children's progress here. There is a history of good education in this village. This school has always maintained a high standard for its students. It is my responsibility to maintain that standard, and parents trust me to do so. (Prakash)

Teaching allows you to interact with children on a daily basis. You play an active role in their education. You transform children into responsible citizens. No other job offers such opportunity. No other profession allows you to feel the same sense of contribution to the country as teaching does. (Trinath)

Working with children is one of the most interesting aspects of my job. It is a pleasure to teach them. I find it entertaining. When I am engaged with them, I lose track of time. (Ankita)

It gives me much satisfaction to know that my teaching contributes to improving the lives of my students. As a result of my work today, I am certain that they will become better individuals in the future. My day-to-day interactions with them make me happy. (Seema)

The most satisfying aspect of my job is that I am able to share my knowledge with my students. They can learn whatever is good in me. It is like social service. I like that. When some children fail to learn I feel frustrated. I reflect and try to figure out what is wrong with my teaching method. I feel frustrated when we are asked to do something, and another task comes up before we are done with the first one. (Ranjan)

Finally, some participants expressed pride in their colleagues, their fellow contract teachers. In contrast to senior regular teachers, these teachers were recruited after passing the OTET. In their view, the new teachers were both more talented and more committed than the older teachers.

The teachers recruited after OTET are far better than those recruited before. Look at that teacher teaching in that classroom. She is young. She wants to work. Outside, children are making noise. In spite of all this noise, she is still trying to teach, as the exam is just around the corner. Now look at these two teachers sitting in the office. I have never seen their enthusiasm for work. They spent their whole career neglecting their work. What can we do about it? But the newcomers are working hard. (Sarojini)

Without contract teachers, the state's primary education would collapse. All expectations are ultimately placed on their shoulders. (Mohan)

Another source of self-worth for participants was their sense of achievement. To become government employees, they earned teacher education degrees, passed the OTET and were selected for employment. Throughout the process, they encountered competition and succeeded. Moreover, some participants expressed pride in contributing to the economic well-being of their families. As their salaries were irregular and low, they could not be relied upon financially. However, some of them were able to support their families on occasion. Small gestures such as purchasing a smartphone for younger brother or giving a loved one something expensive on her wedding day contributed to their pride.

7.7 Exercising corporate agency

According to Archer (1995) when agents organise and articulate their interests they can be termed corporate agents. In Odisha, there are several teachers' unions that represent the interests of different cadres of teachers. The participants in this study were members of the Odisha Junior Teachers' Association. Members of this association are grouped at block level. Meetings of members of every block are held once or twice a year in schools near the block's headquarters. The meetings provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss their problems, demands, and plans of action. Additionally, topics pertaining to the functioning of the association, such as its finances, positions, and leadership, are also discussed. Participants reported that the topics covered at the last meeting they attended were: pending arrears, updating their profiles on the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) website of Odisha, and irregular salary disbursements. All the association members of a block are added to a WhatsApp group. Some participants noted that attending association meetings was difficult for them due to the difficulty of getting to the venues by public transportation. The WhatsApp group kept them informed of meeting decisions and association activities. All participants contributed small amounts of money to union activities when requested. There was broad agreement among participants that active union members assisted teachers in

bureaucratic matters. However, except for one participant, none had played any leadership role in the association. According to the data, 10 out of 17 participants had joined in strikes conducted by their association. Although most did not participate in strikes for personal reasons, they were supportive of their association and strikes conducted by it. The following quotes demonstrate participants' understanding of the reasons for the strike and convey why they could or could not be present in it.

> Our colleagues went on strike last year. I attended the strike at the district headquarters. We voluntarily join such strikes because the movement is ours; it's about claiming our rights. We are not forced to participate. In the last strike, we demanded that the arrears be paid as soon as possible. We received an increment after three years, but the salary was increased after five years. We have not yet received the arrears of two years. The arrears amount will be a maximum of Rs. 25000 per teacher. It is about time for us to become regular teachers. What is the point of getting arrear if we don't get it when we need it the most? In this regard, we also met with the collector. There are employees who are paid lakhs of rupees in arrears, yet they neglect to pay us such a small amount. (Manisha)

> I was unable to join the teachers on strike in Bhubaneswar. Our block office sent us a letter warning us that if we joined the strike, action would be taken against us. Despite this, many teachers took CLs and went to Bhubaneswar. I did not have any CL left. I have participated in such strikes twice in the past. At that time, our local leader was very powerful. This time, the demand was for our salary to be revised based on the 7th pay commission. We wanted a 25% increment and Rs. 2800 grade pay. (Sudhir)

> Last year, I participated in the strike in Bhubaneswar. Another teacher from our school participated as well. I was there for two days. The demands we made were about our salaries and grade pay of regular teachers. I don't remember the details. We demanded a yearly salary increase. They say that teachers' strike hampers education in schools. This is not true. Teachers do not participate in strikes for a long period of time. We join them for a couple of days and return. No one forces us to take part. We voluntarily participate as it is our strike. Who will voice our demands if we don't do it ourselves? Teachers still lack unity. That is why our demands are never accepted by the government. We need a stronger union. The union fights for our cause. We had permission from the BEO office to take a leave of absence and join the strike. (Gautam)

> Many teachers went on strike last year. In a certain sense, I participated as well. However, I had not travelled to Bhubaneswar, nor even to Keonjhar. Whenever a financial contribution

> was requested, I cooperated. We were requesting a change in our salary, as well as changes to certain government policies, such as the transfer rules and the practice of dismissing teachers without reasonable cause. I am always asked to participate in strikes. If we had sufficient teachers here, I would have gone as well. If I travel anywhere, my students will suffer. There will be no need for teachers to go on strike if the government treats them fairly. They are not going for fun. The situation is forcing them. (Prakash)

7.8 Ultimate concerns

Unlike the 'Modernity's Man' who is constrained by instrumental rationality, people can have ultimate concerns that do not serve as a means of attaining anything else beyond them (Archer, 2000). These are commitments that reflect who we are, our personal identities. While defining our ultimate concerns we also define ourselves. Our lives are structured around our ultimate concerns. This section seeks to identify the ultimate concerns of the participants and discuss how they struggle to organise their lives around these concerns.

In Sarojini's narrative, it appears that, while she had a passion for teaching, her ultimate concern was the wellbeing of her family. Despite the fact that her family could manage without her, she was unwilling to sacrifice her family's needs for her teaching career. Sarojini was living outside Odisha with her twelve-year-old son and husband when she was selected for the job of contract teacher. Both of her in-laws were ill and lived in Odisha. Upon learning about Sarojini's recruitment, they were not very enthusiastic. For Sarojini, accepting the job offer meant being away from all these people. Nevertheless, her husband and father-in-law understood her dilemma and encouraged her to accept the position.

> I never had to earn money for them. They knew I loved teaching. They knew that the sound of school bells makes me restless. I had to seek a new job whenever my husband was transferred to a new city. I would go to job interviews. Whenever I was not selected, I would cry at home. School bells would remind me that I needed to find a teaching job as soon as possible. They had witnessed all this. That's why they let me join. For them too, it was hard. They needed me in their old age. Whenever I visited them, I worked extra hard to make up for my absence. (Sarojini)

After Sarojini became a government teacher, her father-in-law passed away. When he needed her most, she was not able to be there for him. Her mother-in-law now lived on her own, while her adolescent son and husband lived outside of Odisha. Sarojini felt anxious about her family all the time.

> I feel terribly guilty. Every evening, I contact everyone to ensure that they are doing well. There are nights when I am unable to sleep. I don't have anyone to handle my affairs for me. My husband gives me moral support. However, I am aware that I have left a void in their lives. My son is growing up. At times, he behaves aggressively. The boy questions why his father let his mother live away, why she had to get a job. In this stage of my life, I am very concerned about my son. (Sarojini)

Sarojini hoped that either her transfer or the retirement of her husband would solve many of her problems.

While Sarojini had a complicated domestic arrangement, Laxmipriya and Sujata, two other married female teachers, were able to maintain a work-life balance with ease. Though their ultimate concern was the upbringing of their children, their career concerns were well suited to that objective. It was possible for them to prioritise their work when necessary. Laxmipriya got married in an arranged marriage. The family of her husband was seeking a bride who was or would be a teacher. Laxmipriya had just completed her teacher training when she received the marriage proposal. Following her marriage, she was recruited as a contract teacher, which pleased her as well as her in-laws. Her husband's family supported her in all aspects of her work life.

> My family is really cooperative. I couldn't have managed work and family life otherwise. Thanks to them, I can get to school on time every day. Whenever I get home, I don't have to start doing domestic stuff right away. If I'm tired, they can take care of it. They wanted a daughter-in-law who was employed. So they never question my efficiency at home. I wish I had more time and energy for my son. As much as I can, I'm helping him with his studies. (Laxmipriya)

Sujata also receives a great deal of support from her husband in her professional pursuits. It is not difficult for her to maintain a work-life balance. She was able to create a schedule that works for her and her family. Since she could attend to her ultimate concern - her family, she was in a position to think about pursuing her goal of becoming a high school teacher.

> I am lucky to have a cooperative husband. That's why I don't have a problem juggling work and life. When I got this job, my in-laws were happy. They are still happy. We're just three people at home: me, my husband, and my son. My only responsibility is my son. I cook. I sit with my son while he studies. By 11.30 am, his school is over. Last year he used to come here and spend the rest of the day with me. Currently, we do not have transportation facilities. Therefore, my husband picks him up from school and cares for him until I return. He works from home. When he has to leave for somewhere, he leaves our son with me. I go to my in-laws' place during summer vacation and Durga Puja. I don't think my job affects my personal life. It's not like I'm expected to do much. My dream is to be a high school teacher. I want to remain in this profession. I heard the PGT recruitment notice will be out soon. I will apply then. As of now, I have no worries. (Sujata)

Seema had trouble caring for her two children, despite her husband's cooperation. Her mother-in-law used to visit her and look after the children, but as she aged, she became less inclined to make regular visits. Assigned to a far-off village, Ankita lived with her nine-year-old child while her husband, also a teacher was posted near his village and lived with his parents. It was Ankita's ultimate concern to provide her son with a high-quality education, which meant she and her husband had to transfer to schools located near district headquarters. A house of her own was also on her wish list. Her husband had become a regular teacher. They planned to purchase or build a house once Ankita became a regular educator.

The five male participants in this study, each at a different crossroads in their lives, had different ultimate concerns. Mohan, aged 41, had his sights set on earning as much as he could and saving as much money for the future as possible. Although he earned a decent income before becoming a contract teacher, all his earnings were spent on the education and marriage of his siblings. To augment his low salary as a contract teacher, he lived near a town

and offered private tuition. He enrolled his son in his school and stated that his decision was based on his faith in government schools and his conviction that learning occurs more at home than in school. However, this decision also saved him money and time and thus, was consistent with his ultimate concern of reducing expenditure and saving money.

Ranjan got married a few months after becoming a contract teacher. His wife was also a contract teacher from the same batch. They were assigned to schools in the vicinity of the district headquarters and lived in the town. Their three-year-old son had just begun preschool at the time of the interview. Ranjan's mother stayed with them and took care of the child while his parents were at work. Ranjan was worried that, while his wife was also working and earning, they were earning not enough money to live a respectable middle-class life in an urban area. His goal was to rent a bigger flat as well as own a car someday. His wife planned to take out a home loan and build their own house as soon as their jobs were regularised. They were hopeful that with their combined efforts, they would soon be able to establish a secure and urban lifestyle for themselves and their family.

With much hesitation, Goutam, a native of the coastal region of Odisha, accepted a contract teaching position in Keonjhar. Before that, he had a successful business and was married. His wife was a teacher in a private school and lived with her in-laws. When the interview was conducted, their four-year-old son was attending preschool. Goutam took advantage of every chance to visit his family, even though his visits were expensive and cumbersome. He believed that transferring to his native district would be almost impossible and that bringing his family along to stay with him would adversely affect his son's education since he was posted at a relatively remote location. Goutam was in a challenging situation, but he was determined to make it work, despite the cost and effort. The sacrifice was worth it to ensure his son received the best education possible.

> It's not healthy to wallow in depression and brood over my problems. I'm 400 km away from my village and getting such low pay. Still, I'm not unhappy. Life is a mixed bag. If I am feeling low, I will affect my colleagues in the same manner. (Goutam)

Sudhir and Sourav were not ready to become parents while working as contract teachers. Sudhir's wife was a homemaker, while Sourav's wife, who had a nursing degree, was seeking employment. With their current financial situation, both couples felt that they could not afford to have a child.

The ultimate concerns of unmarried participants ranged from making parents happy by obtaining a better employment position to getting married and starting a family. Swagat was 30 years old and about to become a teacher. His parents had been waiting for him to settle down for a long time. To fulfil his parents' wishes, he actively sought marriage proposals. Chandan and Prakash were not even considering marriage because they hoped to obtain better jobs. Not only would a better job make their parents happy, but also make them more attractive as potential marriage candidates. Chandan's father worked as a technician in a large private company and had high expectations for him. Even after working for five years as a teacher, Chandan was unsure whether he made his father proud.

> The feeling I have is that my father is not happy with me. He wants me to get a better job. He encourages me to continue my preparation. In case I don't get any other job, we'll have to be happy with this one. At least I am engaged somewhere. (Chandan)

Prakash was also concerned about making his family proud of him. Having been an average student in school, no one really anticipated that he would obtain a government position. However, now that he had secured a government position, his family expected more of him.

> When I became a teacher, my family was very happy. Now they are happy with me, but a higher salary would have made them even happier. My parents encourage me to keep studying. They want me to be a B.Ed. degree holder. After B.Ed. they want me to do a master's degree. They do not force me to get a better paying job. If I get one, that will be great. They are fine with my employment situation otherwise. Now that I am a bachelor, I do

> not have a lot of pressure on me. I think I should utilize this time to prepare for a better job. (Prakash)

Likewise, Rajendra was considering a job change, but his primary motive was to improve his quality of life. He despised the workload, social standing, salary, and rural assignments of teachers.

> I am preparing for competitive examinations such as examinations for railway jobs. I am seeking a central government job. I like teaching, but... it's more work here. At home, I prepare my daily lesson plan. As the school day begins, I am required to take care of MDM. I need to check whether the toilet is clean. After that, I teach. The situation here is very stressful for me. Our profession is also losing respect. Children don't like us. Instead of greeting us children pretend not to notice us when we meet them outside of school. No parent has greeted me with 'namaskar' until now. I don't mind all that, but I feel bad about my salary. One day, I will be a regular teacher, and my salary will increase. However, once I am married, even my salary as a regular teacher will not be sufficient. In today's society, everyone desires to live in a city or a town. Everyone desires good education for their children which is available in urban areas. We are the only profession today that receives postings in villages. Besides primary teachers, all other government employees are posted in small and large cities. Even if I am assigned to an urban school, how can I live comfortably on a teacher's salary? (Rajendra)

As the eldest siblings in their families, Trinath and Manisha were concerned about the education and marriage of their younger brothers and sisters. Before starting their own families, they wanted to meet the financial obligations of their parents. Nivedita seemed at ease with her life's trajectory, and her main concern was enjoying the pleasures of life to the fullest. Laughter filled her voice as she said:

> Currently, I do not have any financial obligations towards my family. We are a joint family with multiple sources of income. No one is dependent on me. If I do not receive my salary on time, I receive money from home. I occasionally give my mother some money. I love shopping. I purchase items for my family members and relatives. I gifted a phone to my brother. I enjoy treating my friends to good food. After I have become a regular teacher, I intend to save some money. My goal is to travel. As I approach marriage, I will ensure that my husband is comfortable with me enjoying myself. (Nivedita)

7.9 Conclusion

Our purpose in this chapter was to examine the synthesis between the participants' social and personal identities. It discussed how participants strategised to thrive as contractual teachers. According to the findings, many of them considered teaching to be a risky occupation. Their minds were constantly occupied with the sword of punishment that hung over their heads at all times. To overcome fear, they diligently maintained a high degree of caution. As much as possible, they worked sincerely and endeavoured to learn about the various activities teachers were expected to perform. There were some of them who recognized the importance of colleagues as a source of learning and confidence at work. Additionally, participants felt more confident when the students were able to answer visiting officers' questions intelligently and fearlessly. By strategically assuming the identity of contract teachers, they were able to avoid the aggression of visiting officers and senior teachers. Some participants placed a higher priority on non-teaching work than on teaching.

In Archer's (2000) view, emotions serve as a commentary on our concerns. The human capacity for reflexivity, however, makes it possible to achieve second order emotionality. There were three emotional states that participants attempted to overcome in their work lives: anger, frustration, and boredom. Participants felt angry about non-teaching work that distracted them from teaching, students' unwillingness to be taught, and rules and orders that disregarded teachers' convenience. Frustration commonly resulted from repeated attempts to teach students without success. There was a feeling among teachers that their efforts were in vain since the students did not practice at home the lessons they had learnt at school. Boredom resulted from prolonged engagement in non-teaching work, as well as attending school during the holidays. Participants needed to be self-aware enough to recognize their negative emotions and be able to deal with them consciously in order to be successful as teachers.

Participants' personification of their roles as teachers offered insights into how their personal concerns contributed to their professional image. Their behaviour was influenced by various aspects of their personal lives, such as their experiences as teachers in private schools, impressions of what constituted an 'ideal teacher', interest in personal hygiene, activity-based learning, fostering leadership and competitive spirit, as well as gardening. The participants had a vague understanding of the promotion opportunities available to teachers. Career advancement seemed to be a source of little excitement for many. Nevertheless, the younger teachers enrolled in distant education programmes to earn higher degrees. Older participants expressed disappointment that promotions were based solely on seniority rather than performance.

The relationship with students played a significant role in the participants' sense of self-worth. They reported that they had gained a better understanding of students and were glad that they had contributed to their wellbeing in a positive way. Some participants were proud of their colleagues. Being a government employee also provided a sense of accomplishment. Some participants were pleased with themselves for having been able to contribute to the financial needs of their families. The participants' involvement with the teachers' union varied. Though all were formal union members, some participated in union activities only to a limited extent. Only one participant has held a leadership position in the union for some time. The union's demands and strikes were enthusiastically endorsed and justified by all participants.

Lastly, the ultimate concerns of participants, arising from their unique circumstances, indicated how their social identity as contract teachers aligned with their personal concerns. The married females were committed to balancing their work and personal lives. Some participants had few and manageable family obligations, allowing them to prioritize their careers. Taking care of family and working at the same time proved difficult for some

participants. Males who were married were dedicated to earning as much as possible and devoted some of their time to offering private tuition. Having been posted far from their families, visiting home at every opportunity became a priority for one participant. In the case of two participants, contractual employment inhibited their pursuit of their ultimate concern, which was to raise a family. The unmarried participants were concerned about making their parents proud by obtaining better jobs. Their goals included achieving better lifestyles, getting married, educating their siblings, and arranging their weddings.

The question is, to what extent were they willing to invest in their social identities? How important was their social identity to their personal identity? Data presented in this chapter indicate that some participants were more invested in their work than others. The task of balancing multiple roles that demanded the same level of time and energy was not easy for some participants. Since they were afraid of erring and attracting punishment, they were too occupied with non-teaching activities. Nonetheless, most of them reported that they personified their role in distinctive ways based on their own unique concerns. While the job was not regarded as a source of self-worth by all, for many self-worth was a function of their interaction with students, colleagues, and contribution to the welfare of their families.

As Archer (2000) asserts, 'there is nothing which automatically ensures that social concerns have top priority.' Social concerns lose priority if they do not align with people's personal concerns. This conclusion needs to be read against the argument of advocates of contract teacher policy who claim that balancing incentives and disincentives (contractual employment, low pay, threat of job loss etc.) would automatically result in an increase in teacher commitment and performance. To prove the shallowness of this argument, one need only examine the personal lives of teachers in detail. When teachers do not view their work-related identity as a sufficient source of self-worth, it is likely that they will work solely to earn a living and meet only minimum expectations. The contractual requirements of teachers

make it difficult for them to thrive and derive satisfaction from their careers. It prevents them from fulfilling their personal concerns. There are, however, other problems facing early career teachers in Odisha in addition to contractual employment. There were several factors that either hindered or facilitated the participants' performance, even when they were willing to invest themselves in their jobs. In the following chapter, we will take a closer look at the constraints and enablements that participants face as they work.

Chapter 8

Constraints and enablements in the working lives of early career teachers

In the Archerian framework, causal powers such as social structure (roles, rules, institutions etc.) and culture (discourses, doctrines, tastes etc.) become constraints and enablements when they impede or facilitate specific agential projects. This study is interested in exploring which causal powers are perceived by early career teachers of elementary schools as constraints and enablements as they implement their responsibilities as teachers. According to the data, the constraints include student absenteeism, parental apathy, problems within students' families, learning deficit among students, inadequate staffing in schools, unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations of the government, policies that prevent punishment and detention, insufficient rewards and arbitrary sanctions for teachers, a policymaking environment that is student-friendly but not teacher-friendly, and a lack of respect and support from the community in general. These constraints stifled participants' efforts to educate students. Availability of in-service training is the only factor that can be regarded as an enablement of the participants' performance. Smartphone usage has an ambiguous status since it can simultaneously increase teachers' non-teaching workload and facilitate their teaching activities. The findings presented in this chapter reveal how teachers interpret the causal powers they confront and their skepticism regarding certain policies, such as the policy of no punishment and no detention. The findings of this chapter are therefore particularly relevant to policymaking and teacher education programmes. Teachers require support to deal with what they perceive as constraints, and the enablements need to be made more effective.

8.1 Student absenteeism, parental apathy, and problems within students' families

There was a general complaint among participants that a majority of students in government schools and their parents did not take school seriously. It was reported that 20-30 per cent of students attended school irregularly. Many students come to school for 10-15 days regularly followed by 4-5 days of absence. Participants argued that it was parents who were partly responsible for student absenteeism. Many parents find it acceptable for their children to skip school and spend time at home instead. Some parents and students believe that private tuition is sufficient for an education. Every morning, the students of Sarojini's school attend a private tuition class. As if it were a school, they crowd there for two hours in the morning, but some of them do not return to school afterward. There is also a seasonal variation in student absenteeism. It is common for students to skip school for extended periods of time during festivals. Sometimes, teachers (usually male teachers) visit the homes of absent students and drive them to the school with their motorcycles.

A high rate of student absenteeism is not only detrimental to the education of frequent absentees, but also adversely affects the education of regular students by disrupting the flow of teaching and learning activities. Laxmipriya explained:

> Let's say I teach something today and the next thing is planned for tomorrow. There are, however, some students who will not be present tomorrow. In this case, what can I do? As long as all students attend regularly and learn something every day, I am satisfied. Otherwise, I will have to repeat the same things over and over again. A student who has been absent for two days will not be able to resume where he left off. His starting point would be an older lesson. As a result, not everyone in the class is on the same page. Students who attend school regularly find it frustrating when we repeat lessons rather than teaching them new lessons every day. (Laxmipriya)

According to the participants, parents are not only unconcerned about the importance of their children attending school regularly, but also neglect to ensure that their children are studying at home. In some cases, parents do not even care how their children are progressing academically. Having taught in private schools for six years, Ranjan believed that this was one of the key differences between parents of students in government schools and parents of students in private schools.

> Guardians of children enrolled in private schools are generally much more concerned. They review the results of the examinations. They come to school if there is a problem. Here, neither the guardians nor the children are concerned. Guardians of children in private schools are bound to exercise extra caution since they pay for their children's education. (Ranjan)

However, the heightened concern of parents whose children attend private schools may not be solely attributed to the fact that they pay significant tuition fees. The headteacher of Rajendra's school recalled that early in his career, he observed that many parents of students enrolled in his school were concerned about the education of their children. In his opinion, such concerned parents no longer send their children to government schools while only apathetic parents who neither have the capacity to supervise their children's education nor interest opt for government schools.

As reported by the participants, apathy and irresponsibility on the part of parents can negatively affect the education of their children in a number of ways. A parent who is unconcerned about their child's education is likely to be unconcerned about their child's health. Thus, children fall ill and their education is further disrupted. Children do not receive the guidance, inspiration, and academic ambition that they need to succeed in school. Many parents are unaware that their children's education is also dependent on a stable and conducive home environment. Disturbances in the family do not only interfere with study at home, but also lead to students arriving at school in a disturbed state of mind.

We cannot really predict the future of these children because so much depends on the conditions in their homes. I have observed students who did poorly in primary school but did well in high school. I have also observed students whose conditions deteriorate over time. There was a student here in grade one who was exceptionally bright. In grade one, he was able to solve division problems. Our hope was that he would be awarded a scholarship and be admitted to any Model school. However, he suffered from frequent illness and remained absent from school for a number of days. By the fourth grade, he was virtually indistinguishable from the other students. His performance was no better than that of his peers. It's hard to tell what lies ahead for these kids. I ask them what they plan to do in the future. They say they want to go to so and so school. Although they're excited, their parents don't even bother to collect their certificates. Five months after graduation, they will collect the certificate and enrol their children in the sixth grade. Their negligence is a problem. There are many cases where father and mother live separately, father has a second wife, parents quarrel and the child is sent to live with an uncle or aunt. Although we are trained to handle psychological issues, sometimes the situation is out of our control. (Manisha)

8.2 Learning deficit among students

According to Pratham's Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER), students in India lack grade-specific learning, and international organizations like the World Bank regard this as a 'learning crisis.' While teachers are commonly held responsible for deficiencies in students' learning, according to the participants in the study, learning deficits begin in preschool. They expect that children should have learned something at Anganwadi before entering grade one.

Anganwadi must perform its role effectively. We attempt to teach children the basics if they have no prior learning. They learn something in the first grade. We must promote them to grade two regardless of their learning level. As they were not prepared for grade one in the first place, if we attempt to teach everything they are supposed to learn at grade one, they will not be able to learn. With each grade promotion, the learning deficit accumulates. (Nivedita)

We have seven students in grade one this year. Anganwadi workers have not taught these children anything. They do not know the Odia alphabets. I am having difficulty teaching these basics. (Prakash)

As the excerpt from Nivedita's interview indicates, the automatic grade promotion system is also believed to contribute to the learning deficit. The argument is that since examinations are

not consequential, students have little incentive to study. The shortage of teachers in primary schools was also cited by participants as a contributing factor to the learning deficit among students.

> Why children fail to learn grade specific lessons is a complex question with many answers. A student enrolled in our school in grade three. When he joined, his learning level was almost zero. Before coming here, he attended a nearby primary school. It is a small school with approximately 50 students and two teachers. The headteacher is the BLO of that village and is always busy with BLO work. The other teacher is responsible for teaching all subjects in all five grades. How can she perform her job satisfactorily? The government has now included grade eight in ME schools. Do we have adequate teachers in ME schools? Every school should have more teachers than grades taught. (Seema)

A few participants felt that some teachers in government primary schools neglect their duties as teachers and do not care whether their students are learning. It is not uncommon for one such negligent teacher to induce a learning deficit among students which would take bigger proportions over the course of the following years.

> My son is in grade one at a private school. I was thinking about enrolling him here. I could have taught him in only one grade. What about the other grades? I don't really think the lady who teaches grade two students teaches anything. Her excuse is that she is busy with office work. Her attitude is annoying the teachers in grades three and four. She is making our work more difficult. How could my son learn in such a situation? (Sujata)

8.3 Inadequate staffing in schools

Almost all participants reported that there was a shortage of teachers in their schools. The RTE Act, 2009 prescribes a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 in primary schools and 35:1 in upper primary schools. The schools I visited during fieldwork often satisfied this norm. In schools with fewer than 60 students, there were two teachers. Typically, the head teacher handled all the paperwork while the other teacher taught students in multi-grade classrooms. Although teachers working in such schools do not complain about teacher shortages, they believe their situation is far from ideal. Rajendra, who had taught in a private school, stated:

> I have taught in both government and private schools. There is a difference in the teaching method in both kinds of schools. Every grade has a teacher in private schools. In larger private schools, there are teachers for every subject. Here, we are only two teachers for five grades. This means I have to teach students from all grades together, in one classroom. Further, since private schools have an adequate number of teachers, the teachers are able to relax and rest. We deal with students all day here. Teachers in private schools follow a routine. There's no routine here. In a single-teacher-multi-grade classroom how can you follow a routine? (Rajendra)

Teacher shortages were also evident in schools with more than two teachers. In Sujata's school, for example, grade one and eight students were seated in one classroom because one of the eight teachers was on maternity leave. When a teacher is engaged in some non-teaching activity, which usually occurs quite often, students are left on their own since there are no additional teachers to cover her class. In Laxmipriya's school there were five teachers for eight grades. Apart from lunch break, most of the time teachers were in classrooms, leaving little time for preparation or relaxation. In addition to teacher shortage, there is a shortage of support staff in elementary schools. The majority of participants agreed that every school should have a clerk to handle paperwork and reports. The task of photocopying forms, filling them up over and over again according to changing instructions takes up a lot of time on the part of the teachers. It is also pertinent to note that no primary school has any sanitation staff to clean toilets, despite both the union and state governments prioritizing the construction of toilets in schools. As Manisha expressed her frustration:

> There is no one here to clean the toilets. We sweep the office ourselves. When we were students, we used to sweep our school classrooms and premises. Why is there a problem now? As students, we had to maintain our toilets. If we ask children to clean toilets here, the media will turn it into an issue. Should teachers clean toilets at schools? By engaging children in cleanliness activities and gardening, we are not hindering their academic success. If the government does not like this, then why does it not recruit sweepers and gardeners in every school? (Manisha)

8.4 Unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations of the government

Several participants expressed their irritation with the requirement of writing lesson plans every day. Although not tedious, they did not consider writing lesson plans a particularly helpful activity. At best, it was a formality they had to follow in order to meet the expectations of visiting officers who were fixated on reviewing lesson plans during their school visits. They felt vulnerable when someone visited their school and their lesson plan record was not up-to-date. Their lesson plans served as evidence of their teaching activities.

> As we teach something, we are already aware of the lesson's objectives. These are outlined in the government's guidebooks. It is not a problem. The problem is that we have to prove that we have actually followed everything mentioned in those books. To claim that I have taught that much in class, I must include that in my lesson plan. For instance, if I want to teach something else... let's say I feel my students are not good at counting, and so I decide to focus on teaching numbers every day after recess. I can't do this. I must adhere to the weekly plan. (Ankita)

> It is difficult to teach everything that we write in our lesson plans. Regardless, we must write everything. A lesson plan is ideal, but classroom conditions are not always ideal. (Swagat)

As with writing lesson plans, participants felt that the education department had many unrealistic and inflexible expectations for teachers. By prescribing what should be taught and how in minute detail, the department leaves no room for customized instruction to meet the needs of each student. Treating teachers as mere dispensers of pre-decided curriculum demonstrates a lack of faith in their professional judgment. Goutam noted:

> To a certain extent, we have the freedom to choose our methods, but the work pressure is so high that we do not have time to follow our instincts. We are supposed to teach the same thing to all children for the same amount of time and ensure similar learning levels. Is this really possible? Ideally, we should focus each student individually. To do this, we need more time, resources, and freedom. (Goutam)

Two learning enhancement programs were introduced in Odisha in 2018: *Ujjwal* for grades one to five and *Utthan* for grades six to eight. It was decided that the first forty days of the academic session would be reserved for remedial instruction, while one period would be allocated to

remedial instruction throughout the remainder of the academic year. In April 2018, a massive teacher training exercise was conducted and specially designed workbooks were distributed to all schools. During the fieldwork phase, participants already had some experience implementing these programs. They differed in their assessments of the need, design, implementation, and success of these programs. Since the implementation of the programs was mandatory, all teachers were required to implement them in accordance with the suggested method, regardless of their own opinions. However, participants who felt that these programs were poorly designed or considered remedial classes unnecessary for their students, viewed the program as a waste of time for themselves and their students. Most participants were critical of these programs because of their inflexibility. In the words of Trinath:

> *Ujjwal* was neither helpful to weak students nor bright students. Forty days of remedial classes are not enough for weak students. It is absurd that students who struggle with simple addition and substation problems during *Ujjwal* have to answer grade-specific questions in the half-yearly examination. They are asked questions about the length and breadth of rectangles. These students cannot answer a single question in this examination. During *Ujjwal*, advanced students just revise what they have already learned well. In those months, they should have acquired grade-specific knowledge. It is a waste of time for them. *Ujjwal* is required, but the program should be flexible. (Trinath)

8.5 No punishment and no detention policies

In Nias' (1999) observations, teachers are just as concerned with control as they are with students' learning, and they generally hold that respecting teachers' authority is a prerequisite to learning. Even lay people expect that teachers should be able to control themselves and their students. Traditionally, teachers have used corporal punishment as a means of exercising authority and controlling student behaviour. However, many countries have outlawed this practice in recent decades. In India, the RTE Act, 2009 prohibits corporal punishment in schools. The National Policy for Children, 2013 states that the state shall ensure "ensure no child is subjected to any physical punishment or mental harassment" and "promote positive

engagement to impart discipline so as to provide children with a good learning experience." Data indicate that participants, although convinced of the rationale behind the prohibition of corporal punishment, feel that they have lost control over students without the authority to administer corporal punishment. The challenge of disciplining students without resorting to physical punishment is often perceived as a constraint by participants. The following excerpts from interviews illustrate perspectives on corporal punishment held by participants.

> There is no fear of teachers among students here. They don't take us seriously. Only a few students turn in their homework. There's nothing wrong with a little punishment. It wasn't all that bad. Now we have to shout at them every time they do something wrong. The louder you are, the better. But there's one good thing about no punishment: kids can talk freely to us. (Sudhir)

> There were times when teachers became violent and severely beat up children. So, I'm glad punishment is banned. Teachers should treat children with love. Nevertheless, sometimes we must scream in order to maintain discipline. I think it's possible to punish students without harming them. (Nivedita)

> Complete prohibition of punishment is a bad idea. Children do not fear us. As children, we feared our teachers. We held them in high regard. Today, children do not respect us nor do they fear us. You might remember a video that became viral a few days ago showing a sixth grade student behaving aggressively with his teacher. When a teacher is at fault, or shows inappropriate behaviour, there are people at higher levels who can intervene. However, now children are judging teachers. This is not acceptable. Although the children in grades six, seven, and eight appear to have grown, they are still very immature. As a family, we do not discuss everything with children of this age. Every time we make a decision, we do not consult with them or ask for their permission. We do not force them to participate in the world of adults. However, in school we want them to behave like adults! (Sujata)

> Parents encourage teachers to punish and discipline their children. However, if you punish, they will complain the next day. I used to beat children but one of my colleagues urged me to stop. This would cost me my job, he said. It's okay if students don't study without punishment, but save your job. (Mohan)

It appears from the excerpts that participants are in favour of mild punishment. In any case, they scream at students as a means of creating fear in their students. In other words, they are

unable to figure out how to manage students without resorting to violence. Although they do not intend to beat their students, they wish to show the stick and keep them aware of the possibility of punishment. It is believed that most students do not respect or take teachers seriously without punishment or the threat of punishment. According to some participants, fear of teachers is a necessary condition for successful learning. Thus, the prohibition on punishment is not regarded as conducive to students' learning, making the job of teachers more difficult. The same sentiments are expressed regarding the policy of automatic grade promotion or the no-detention policy. It is considered one of the primary causes of learning deficits among students. It has been suggested by some participants that underperforming students need to appear at least one or two consequential examinations in elementary school, if not failing them every year. According to participants both students and teachers disregard examinations in which students cannot fail. As an alternative to the no detention policy, no participant mentioned the use of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).

> It is very important to have a detention policy. There must be at least two 'check points'. We should be able to halt promotion in grades three and five. There are a few students here in grade eight who do not know anything, not even the alphabet. They don't take exams seriously due to no-detention policy. I don't mind if they ask each other to write a correct answer during the exam. (The students were writing half-yearly tests during the interview.) But I don't want them to copy directly from the textbooks. So, I have instructed them to leave their bags at the door of the classroom. Question papers are also in short supply. There are eight question papers available for 16 students. What can you do here? They're sitting in groups of two. They are discussing and writing comfortably. It is better than conducting the exam strictly and receiving blank answer sheets at the end. (Sourav)

> In my opinion, the no-detention policy is not in the best interests of students' education. For failed students, we could provide remedial classes. Now, regardless of whether a student has learned or not, he is promoted to the next grade. This is not a viable solution. Rather, it is a problem for which we have introduced new initiatives such as *Ujjwal* and *Uthana*. Even these two programs are not 100% successful. (Chandan)

> In my view, examinations are necessary. It is because of exams that students study. Without exams, they will not know whether they have really learned anything. In addition to exams,

> punishment is also necessary. The main reason behind the learning deficit we see at the moment has to do with the removal of detention policies and punishment systems from our schools. (Sarojini)

8.6 Insufficient rewards and arbitrary sanctions for teachers

Several participants expressed concern that there was no system in place to recognize and reward teachers who are sincere and hardworking. While many agreed that teachers who acted negligently or in error were punished for their actions, such punishments are at best arbitrary and at worst unlawful and ineffective. Thus, many participants had become disillusioned with the system. The participants suggested that a fairer system should be put in place to reward teachers who put in genuine effort and perform well. These teachers might be considered for promotion or leadership roles regardless of their seniority. This would help restore faith in the system and encourage excellence.

> There is no recognition for good work. Nevertheless, if you provoke the administration, they may take action against you. They can dismiss you. They can withhold your salary. (Prakash)

> There is no system in place to detect whether you are teaching sincerely. Good teachers are not identified or rewarded in a systematic manner. Rarely do you feel appreciated. They award an ideal teacher at the district level. But you have to motivate yourself to keep going. In terms of punishment, you only get caught red-handed if you're unlucky. If you break a rule accidentally, the HM warns you. However, if you do the same thing again, he'll inform higher authorities. (Trinath)

> There is no reward. And it is very unlikely that you will be punished for your actions. There are a lot of ways out. The punishments that you hear from time to time are all nonsense, not really punishments. It's a show cause notice or they stop paying you. Teachers rarely get suspended. You are always saved. Let’s not get into the details. It's crazy how much corruption there is in the education department, I didn't know. (Sujata)

> To reward good teachers, it is not necessary to hold ceremonies in every village and district to award hundreds of teachers. It doesn't take much to make someone feel appreciated. Multiple opportunities need to be created for bright teachers. You can ask them to mentor new teachers. You might give them laptops or high quality TLMs so they can teach even better. A teacher who

> performs well and has a higher level of qualification should be given an early promotion (Ranjan)

Participants figured out that even in the absence of a systematic mechanism to reward good performance and punish negligence, there were still valid reasons for doing a good job. Sarojini, for example, always tried to complete the syllabus since she was aware that students would notice that she skipped some lessons.

> To get to the end of the syllabus, lazy teachers skip a few things. It's not lost on students, though. There's a good chance they'll ask us about those undiscussed parts. So teachers like me take extra classes and somehow make sure they cover everything on the syllabus. Teachers can cheat. No one gets in trouble. (Sarojini)

Chandan was motivated by the fact that people generally considered his school to be a good school, and because of this, many children from other villages were enrolled there.

> I'm doing my best. Apparently, a school will receive a reward if it completes the entire Ujjwala. I am unaware of any schools that have received such rewards. Recently, the District Mineral Fund (DMF) announced that a test will be conducted on 24th August. Students who qualify will receive a cash reward, as will teachers and the school. It's not always about getting a reward, but there's more to it than that. When a school is performing well, children from surrounding villages may also wish to enrol there. During my tenure at this school, I have seen children from outside the village seeking admission here. Here, they live with their relatives. Earlier, this was not the case. Previously, the teachers were not paying enough attention to the students. It's great to have students from other villages here. (Chandan)

Mohan stated that if he performed well, his colleagues would be motivated because they looked up to him. Many participants referred to the doctrine of Karma. They believed that their good and bad deeds would result in rewards and punishments at a broader level, if not within the education system itself. For example, Seema said:

> It shouldn't affect my work if my peer isn't working. I've got to do my duty. There's no need to worry if others are working. If my colleagues perform well, I'll know. Otherwise, I am motivated by my own sense of duty. It's God's job to punish insincere people. They have to face the consequences of their karma. In the event that someone is breaking a rule that we are affected by, we'll let the higher ups know. Even if there are no complaints and no punishments, they will have to deal with their karma eventually. (Seema)

8.7 Student-friendly but not teacher-friendly policymaking

Many participants argued that the state government had undertaken a number of beneficial initiatives for children, but failed to provide adequate support for teachers. In their view, the government has sufficient funds to provide textbooks, schoolbags, and uniforms to students, but not to pay contract teachers decent salaries or to settle their arrears. They questioned whether the state's unwillingness to invest in teachers was saving state resources or harming students' education in the long run. They recounted many instances in which the education department issued orders without considering how they would affect teachers. The following example is one of many that can be used to illustrate the point.

In 2019, summer vacation was to end by the 18th of June, and schools were to reopen on the 19th. However, the hot weather in the week leading up to school reopening led many parents and teachers to anticipate a revision to the schedule. As of 18 June, no notification had been issued. On the 17th, some teachers posted far from their families or native places began travelling, and some departed on the 18th. On the evening of the 18th, a notification was issued advising that the school reopening date had been revised to the 26th. As soon as teachers received the news, they began their return journeys. It was only two days later, on the 20th, that the education minister announced that the monsoon was expected to arrive shortly and thus, schools would be reopened earlier - on the 21st June. Teachers had less than 24 hours to reach their schools. As a side note, the reopening day coincided with International Yoga Day. According to some participants, the minister wanted Yoga Day to be observed in schools, which was why the school opening date had to be revised again. Some attributed the revision to an interpersonal conflict and ineffective communication between the minister and the principal secretary of the state. Regardless of what the reason might be, the fact remains that nobody took into consideration the concerns of teachers many of whom were forced to spend the

extended vacation travelling to and from their schools. A similar decision-making process prevailed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers were given several instructions, but in most cases their concerns were either ignored or taken into account only after all other factors had been considered.

8.8 Lack of respect and support from communities

There was general agreement among participants that teachers had lost their social status in society. Already undervalued and underpaid by the government, the lack of support from the communities they served exacerbated their feelings of demoralization. Only two participants felt that most parents appreciated their work. Other participants described themselves as vulnerable to the outrage of the community over trivial matters. For Manisha, the community's disrespectful attitude towards the school was an everyday experience.

> These people have no respect for the school, let alone for us. In most evenings, they come and party inside the school premises. Our first job every morning is to clean up the mess they leave here- fish and chicken bones and wine bottles. (Manisha)

Some participants believe that the disrespectful attitude of the community has to do with teachers' educational qualifications. Parents who are well educated and have a good income tend to prefer private schools, whereas poor, illiterate or less educated parents tend to depend on government schools. Since primary school teachers typically possess only an intermediate level of education and have received only CT training, it is likely that there are people who are more educated than teachers in most villages. Participants believed that it was common for these people to regard teachers as inferiors.

> It's the poor who respect us. Well-off people don't show that kind of respect. To them, we're merely primary school teachers. They probably think: what do these people know? They have just studied CT or something. (Swagat)

Some participants noted that among parents who enrolled their children in government schools, a few were politically active and sought to serve on school management committees (SMC). They wanted to appropriate funds from schools instead of considering schools' needs and interests. In part due to their interference, many initiatives for the development of schools either failed to take off or were implemented in a haphazard manner.

> There are a lot of money-minded SMC members. They are only interested in a share of schools' financial transactions. If they do not receive money, they will interfere unnecessarily in everything and create conflict. (Goutam)

8.9 In-service training

Participants' experiences of attending in-service training programmes were largely positive. They justified the need for in-service training on several grounds and hoped that it would be conducted even more systematically in the future. It can therefore be argued that the availability of in-service training is an enablement for teachers to perform their duties. However, whether participants' views regarding the benefits of in-service training and their expectations of it correspond to the objectives of in-service training is still questionable. Whatever the case, most participants perceived in-service training as beneficial, and this subsection discusses their interpretations.

Participants attended two to three in-service training programmes every year. Logistics-wise, they did not experience difficulties attending those training programmes. Training programmes were conducted in small towns nearby, making travel convenient for participants. However, the travel allowance they received was negligible - only Rs. 30 per day. During the interviews, most participants did not forget to mention their appreciation for the food provided in such programmes. In response to the question of why in-service training is necessary and what benefits teachers receive from attending in-service training, participants provided a variety of responses. The following are a few examples.

It's fun to attend training programs. It's a great learning experience. I always hope that somebody will demonstrate how to teach in a manner that will enable all children to learn the same things. However, they do not bring children to such demonstrations. We assume the role of children. In training, we are reminded of what we had learned during our preservice training. We also discuss a variety of topics other than how to teach. They tell us about how to implement new initiatives like *Ujjwal* and *Uthana*. (Ankita)

In training programs, we learn all kinds of stuff. Our learning depends on the quality of the resource persons. Although we all have preservice training degrees, in-service training is still important. We're reminded of things we've already learned. One gets better with practice. It's been 22 years since I got my B.Ed. Some things have slipped my mind. A little revision here and there is good for me. Every teacher, regardless of their level of experience, is required to attend training. In fact, senior teachers need it most. Newly appointed teachers still remember a few things taught in CT/B.Ed. But senior teachers don’t remember anything at all. Unfortunately, they don't take training seriously. (Sarojini)

Every time we attend a training program, we learn something fresh. As we meet teachers, we learn from their experiences. Pre-service training has taught us many things; however, new developments are constantly emerging and we need to be aware of them. New information is shared. It is up to us whether we are willing to learn. Some teachers attend these programs only because they are required to do so. Other teachers want to meet each other and learn from each other. It is a welcome break from the daily routine of the school for some teachers. I like attending training workshops. (Sourav)

In-service training helps in capacity building. Let's look at the case of a particular teacher. Here's Sita Didi, who joined this school in 2013. Back then, ICT wasn't used much in these schools. Now we know about various audio-visual materials, PowerPoint presentations. When I taught in a private school, conducting at least one smart class per week was compulsory. We had a teacher there who had been there for more than 14 years. It was hard for him to use ICT. He needed training. Many teachers will need training if the government wants smart classes in its schools. Similar to ICT, there have been many developments in the field of education. The policies are changing. However, the training programmes do not take into account the specific needs of each teacher. The programmes are designed to meet the needs of the students. Therefore, all teachers receive the same and compulsory training. (Sujata)

In the training programmes, we learn how to deal with parents and how to deliver lessons in a variety of ways. As long as a child has not learned something, you must plan and experiment with new methods of instruction. We receive training in all subjects. Let’s take math. Let's say your students have trouble learning numbers. As a first step, we use the direct method. We write

> the numbers on paper. Students are instructed to observe the shapes of digits and try forming them. To assess them, you would ask them to write these numbers down. They may be able to write the numbers sequentially. The problem arises, however, if you ask them to write a particular number. They have learned writing numbers only serially. If a visitor comes to your school, he may ask any question he likes. He may not ask students to write numbers from 1 to 10. Therefore, we are advised to use more and more TLMs and examples. Training is all about that. Using pebbles, seeds, sticks, etc., you can teach numbers in multiple ways to children. These things were already taught to us during CT. Like everyone else, we tend to forget these things. Not everyone has good memory. (Sudhir)
>
> There is nothing wrong with training programmes. But we forget everything after 15 days. (Mohan)

The above excerpts indicate that participants valued in-service training as it facilitates revision of what they learned in their preservice training, provides opportunities to learn about ongoing developments and execution of new initiatives, and enables teachers to meet each other and exchange ideas. In response to the question of whether in-service training should be conducted more often, most participants replied that the frequency of training was just right and that any more training might hinder teaching activities. The timing of training programmes should be carefully considered and training should be designed to meet the specific needs of teachers, according to some suggestions.

8.10 Availability of smartphones

Recent years have seen a rapid increase in the affordability and adoption of smartphones. Smartphones are becoming essential personal gadgets that function as both mobile phones and infotainment devices. Smartphones have influenced the everyday lives of people of all walks of life in multiple ways and teachers are no exception. As governments are increasingly inclined to use technology for educational purposes, it is often suggested that smartphones can help teachers improve their classroom instruction. With the widespread availability of smartphones, teachers now have easy access to a vast array of information and teaching resources that they

can utilize to engage and inspire their students. Additionally, smartphones can facilitate communication between teachers, students and parents. According to the findings of this study, participants were able to derive these benefits to a certain extent by using their smartphone. Nonetheless, the device cannot be considered an enablement without qualification. For teachers, smartphones have also become a source of paperwork, blurring the line between their personal and professional lives. The following excerpts illustrate how participants benefited from the use of smartphones in their day-to-day work.

> Teaching is easier with my smartphone. I can show students relevant images and videos on my phone. Animated videos are particularly popular with children. (Laxmipriya)

> I like learning about different countries, places, and islands. I usually get my news from newspapers and YouTube. Whenever I have to teach about a country, I watch videos about it. I learn about places, lakes, rivers, ports, cultures, etc. My teaching is enhanced by this knowledge. (Swagat)

> We do not know everything under the sun. We can only think of a few examples. We can find more examples, solutions, photos, videos etc. on the internet. A teacher can really benefit from a smartphone. (Rajendra)

Participants could also stay connected with their friends, fellow teachers, and members of their union through their smartphones. This allowed them to share tips, experiences, and resources with one another. It gave them a sense of solidarity and community. It also enabled them to stay informed of rules and directives issued by the Department of Education from time to time. By using social media platforms and messaging apps, they were able to share their opinions on government decisions.

> I made many friends at CT college who are still in touch with me today. Most of them are teachers. Our WhatsApp group is awesome. It's a place where we can talk about our schools, work issues, and personal matters too. In this block, all contract teachers have a WhatsApp group. It is in that group that we share orders, notices, and ask for clarifications. (Prakash)

> I didn't have a smartphone before. I got one just recently. It's great for teaching, looking up words in a dictionary, and preparing students for dance competitions. We can get official communications instantly through smartphones. In the past, a lot of these communications

> never reached us or came late. I have also joined a couple of teachers' groups on Facebook. I love reading the posts and comments there. (Sarojini)

Nevertheless, many participants viewed smartphones as distracting devices. As Rajendra admitted, he had a habit of checking his phone notifications as soon as they appeared, so keeping it silent during class caused him some anxiety. Seema's students frequently requested that she show them entertainment videos on her smartphone. However, the most concerning issue with using a smartphone was that it contributed to teachers' workloads. Smartphones served as conduits for paperwork. Teachers with smartphones were considered available outside of school hours and expected to respond to official instructions as fast as possible.

> Nowadays, we get a lot of official notices through WhatsApp. If we don't respond to it quickly, we will be questioned. We must view the message, download the formats, fill out the forms, and submit them. We may capture a picture of the completed form and send it through WhatsApp or ask someone to deliver a hardcopy to the office. When you arrived, I was using my phone to enter voter card data. It is common for us to receive such communications after 4 p.m. as well. (Seema)

> We receive all official communications via smartphone. Sometimes I don’t feel like using it anymore. The HM doesn’t have a smartphone. Of course, she has the money to buy one and knows how to use it. But having a smartphone would increase her workload. So, she would say: you do it because you have received the letter on your phone. On my end, I can’t keep quiet if I receive a communication. I have to inform her. So, I have more work because of my smartphone. (Sourav)

The state government instructed teachers to continue teaching learning activities through WhatsApp during the Covid-19 pandemic. Smartphones allowed many participants to stay in touch with their students. However, many students did not possess smartphones, making it difficult to reach out to them. Further, participants reported that students who had access to smartphones spent most time consuming media and playing video games. They also recalled students who had pleaded with their parents to purchase smartphones so that they could take online classes, but later used these devices primarily to take photos and share them online.

8.11 Conclusion

People are faced with a variety of kinds of constraints and enablements depending on their structural location and agential project. In this chapter, several aspects of participants' working lives were discussed that hindered or facilitated their capacity to perform. Many of the constraints they encountered were intertwined and reinforced by one another. They reported that student absenteeism, parental apathy, and problems within students' families complicated their work. The failure of Anganwadis to teach the basics to children, negligence of fellow teachers, shortages of teachers, and the no-detention policy were cited as factors contributing to learning deficits among students. The government's unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations prevented them from acting on their professional judgments and forced them to adhere to formal procedures. Due to the prohibition on corporal punishment they struggled to discipline their students. Due to insufficient rewards and arbitrary sanctions for teachers, they turned to contextual elements and religious doctrines for motivation. There was a sense that policymaking in the education sector was student-friendly, but not teacher-friendly, which demoralized participants. Many participants lamented that the communities they served did not respect them. Many parents involved in school affairs often prioritised their own pecuniary interests. The provision of in-service training was an enablement for participants in multiple ways. In some ways, smartphones were helpful to them, but they also distracted them from their work and increased the amount of work they had to do.

As reflexive beings, humans can anticipate constraints and enablements to their projects at the deliberation stage. While executing plans, they can circumvent obstacles, adjust their goals, or expand the scope of their efforts depending on their circumstances. Before becoming contractual teachers, participants of this study likely anticipated many of the challenges they would face in government schools. If nothing else, they must have been aware of the

prohibition on punishment and no detention policy. They might have some level of awareness about teacher shortages and learning deficits among students in government schools. Therefore, if they regard all these aspects as constraints to their performance, it is a sign that their preservice education has not prepared them to cope with the realities of government schools. Participants either expressed helplessness before these constraints or circumvented them with great effort. Second, policymakers have failed to communicate with them and convince them of the rationale for their policies. Teachers have not been trained in alternative methods of managing students and motivating students to achieve learning goals without the threat of examinations. The third and final point is that armed with knowledge of what restricts teachers' ability to do their jobs and what facilitates their ability to do them, policymakers and teacher educators should take the necessary steps to remove the constraints and leverage the enabling factors.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Summary of findings

Having been intrigued by the criticism directed at teachers working in government schools in India, I decided to explore the other side of the story - the narrative of teachers. My research focused particularly on early career teachers in Odisha who work for the first six years of their careers with low pay and job insecurity. The questions I posed were: How and why do people decide to become contract teachers? Which factors bear importance in their decision to become teachers? How do they view their work and their working conditions? In order to survive and thrive at work, what strategies do they employ How do they negotiate tensions between their personal and professional commitments? What are the implications of their strategies for their overall wellbeing? How is their work facilitated or hindered by structural and cultural factors? Do they consider themselves capable of overcoming obstacles and taking advantage of opportunities?

In light of Archer's theory on human concerns and creating social identity I reformulated these questions as: What are the concerns and ultimate concerns of early career teachers working in elementary schools of Odisha? Why did they decide to acquire social identities as contract teachers in government elementary schools? In what ways does the condition of contractual employment affect them? In what ways do their social identities and personal identities interact? What are the aspects of their work lives that they consider constraints or enablements to their performance?

The findings indicate that not all participants became teachers because of the inherent merits of the profession. Being a teacher became a project for some as a result of their experiences in

the practical and social order of reality. During their school days, some of them had the opportunity to teach and were motivated by their teachers or parents who were teachers. Teaching was not a career goal for two participants since their family members were teachers, so the profession was too familiar to be of interest. Those who had other career objectives veered into teaching when they were unable to complete their first projects. It was a last resort for them, a second-best choice. In the case of some female participants, teaching was the only career option available to them because their families did not wish them to pursue any other career. For many, being a government employee was more significant than being a teacher. Being a teacher happened to be the most viable way to fulfil their ultimate concern which was obtaining a government job.

Upon joining, participants encountered a variety of expected and unexpected satisfactions and dissatisfactions. Their evaluation of these factors was crucial to determining whether their jobs provided them with the desired social identity. Compared to the list of satisfactions, the list of dissatisfactions was considerably longer. Participants described their regrets and pain as contract teachers. For many participants, maintaining the social identity as government schoolteachers was a source of suffering and failed to provide a sufficient sense of self-worth because of the contractual nature of their appointment.

The satisfactions included positive relationships with colleagues and the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues. Many were pleased with the opportunity to exercise autonomy in the classroom. However, many complained about the inadequate school resources and infrastructure. Parents did not complement their efforts and were unconcerned with their children's education. Some teachers felt overburdened with non-teaching workload and no longer felt like teachers. Living off their low income was probably the most challenging aspect of participants' lives. The salary was not just inadequate to make the ends meet, but irregular as well. The salary issues did not significantly affect those who lived with their parents or

husbands. The most troubled participants were married males and those who lived away from their families. They resorted to several means to survive, including borrowing from friends, seeking aid from parents, purchasing items on credit, and supplementing their income by offering private tuition. There was no way for them to save or make planned expenditures. Due to their contractual status, most teachers felt inferior. In their opinion, their salaries were lower than the wages of laborers. The extent of their non-teaching duties rendered them multi-purpose government employees rather than teachers.

Some were concerned about transfers to better or preferred schools. Nevertheless, the data indicate that they were uncertain regarding how the transfer system worked and pessimistic about the likelihood of receiving a transfer to the locations they desired. Several participants reported being discriminated against by regular teachers. Due to the contractual recruitment policy, they did not feel like equal members of the professional community. Younger participants were disenchanted with their current jobs and preparing for a new career. It was disappointing to have worked all the way through to become a teacher and then felt the need to make course corrections. Lastly, being a female teacher was also a source of some unique challenges. According to some female participants, locals could easily harass them, while male teachers felt that female teachers were often negligent. Additionally, since most female teachers did not possess personal vehicles, they dreaded non-teaching work that required frequent travel. Participants differed in the extent to which these dissatisfactions impacted their lives.

Many of them considered teaching to be a risky occupation. Their minds were constantly occupied with the sword of punishment that hung over their heads at all times. To overcome fear, they diligently maintained a high degree of caution. As much as possible, they worked sincerely and endeavoured to learn about the various activities teachers were expected to perform. There were some of them who recognized the importance of colleagues as a source of learning and confidence at work. Additionally, participants felt more confident when the

students were able to answer visiting officers' questions intelligently and fearlessly. By strategically assuming the identity of contract teachers, they were able to avoid the aggression of visiting officers and senior teachers. Some participants placed a higher priority on non-teaching work than on teaching.

There were three emotional states that participants attempted to overcome in their work lives: anger, frustration, and boredom. Participants felt angry about non-teaching work that distracted them from teaching, students' unwillingness to be taught, and rules and orders that disregarded teachers' convenience. Frustration commonly resulted from repeated attempts to teach students without success. There was a feeling among teachers that their efforts were in vain since the students did not practice at home the lessons they had learnt at school. Boredom resulted from prolonged engagement in non-teaching work, as well as attending school during the holidays.

Participants' personification of their roles as teachers offered insights into how their personal concerns contributed to their professional image. Their behaviour was influenced by various aspects of their personal lives, such as their experiences as teachers in private schools, impressions of what constituted an 'ideal teacher', interest in personal hygiene, activity-based learning, fostering leadership and competitive spirit, as well as gardening. The participants had a vague understanding of the promotion opportunities available to teachers. Career advancement seemed to be a source of little excitement for many. Nevertheless, the younger teachers enrolled in distant education programmes to earn higher degrees. Older participants expressed disappointment that promotions were based solely on seniority rather than performance.

The relationship with students played a significant role in the participants' sense of self-worth. They reported that they had gained a better understanding of students and were glad that they had contributed to their wellbeing in a positive way. Some participants were proud of their

colleagues. Being a government employee also provided a sense of accomplishment. Some participants were pleased with themselves for having been able to contribute to the financial needs of their families. The participants' involvement with the teachers' union varied. Though all were formal union members, some participated in union activities only to a limited extent. Only one participant has held a leadership position in the union for some time. The union's demands and strikes were enthusiastically endorsed and justified by all participants.

The ultimate concerns of participants, arising from their unique circumstances, indicated how their social identity as contract teachers aligned with their personal concerns. The married females were committed to balancing their work and personal lives. Some participants had few and manageable family obligations, allowing them to prioritize their careers. Taking care of family and working at the same time proved difficult for some participants. Males who were married were dedicated to earning as much as possible and devoted some of their time to offering private tuition. Having been posted far from their families, visiting home at every opportunity became a priority for one participant. In the case of two participants, contractual employment inhibited their pursuit of their ultimate concern, which was to raise a family. The unmarried participants were concerned about making their parents proud by obtaining better jobs. Their goals included achieving better lifestyles, getting married, educating their siblings, and arranging their weddings.

Many of the constraints participants encountered were intertwined and reinforced by one another. They reported that student absenteeism, parental apathy, and problems within students' families complicated their work. The failure of Anganwadis to teach the basics to children, negligence of fellow teachers, shortages of teachers, and the no-detention policy were cited as factors contributing to learning deficits among students. The government's unrealistic and inflexible pedagogical expectations prevented them from acting on their professional judgments and forced them to adhere to formal procedures. Due to the prohibition on corporal

punishment they struggled to discipline their students. Due to insufficient rewards and arbitrary sanctions for teachers, they turned to contextual elements and religious doctrines for motivation. There was a sense that policymaking in the education sector was student-friendly, but not teacher-friendly, which demoralized participants. Many participants lamented that the communities they served did not respect them. Many parents involved in school affairs often prioritised their own pecuniary interests. The provision of in-service training was an enablement for participants in multiple ways. In some ways, smartphones were helpful to them, but they also distracted them from their work and increased the amount of work they had to do.

9.2 Discussion

The findings of this study are in many ways consistent with previous research. For example, Batra's (2005) comments regarding job seekers' attitudes toward the teaching profession in India still holds true. Teaching continues to be 'a least favoured profession', 'a last resort', 'a safe fall back option' and 'a socially acceptable profession' for women (Batra, 2005, p. 4347). Similarly, the PROBE (1999) report observed that "A teacher trapped in a ramshackle village school, surrounded by disgruntled parents, irregular pupils and overbearing inspectors, can hardly be expected to work with any enthusiasm" (p. 63). Although infrastructure has improved in many schools over the past two decades, there are still critical gaps. Students are irregular and parents are dissatisfied. School inspectors have been redesignated as education officers, but the inspectorial culture still persists. Lastly, these factors continue to have an adverse effect on teachers as observed by PROBE. They find it difficult to be passionate about their work. This study also supports the findings of Sarangapani (2003) and Brinkmann (2019). Some teachers still believe that rural children have a lesser potential for education and children must be controlled through fear and discipline.

This study, however, produced some findings that are at odds with previously published findings. Brinkmann (2019), for instance, found that teachers viewed their purpose as earning a salary rather than contributing to society in any substantive way. Participants in this study explicitly stated that they felt that their work in schools contributed to the improvement of society at large. In fact, in the absence of a decent salary, there was no other motivation for them, and thus the sense of contributing to society became their source of self-worth. Similarly, unlike the PROBE report, which states that most teachers are simply inactive at school, participants in this study asserted that their work was very demanding on a regular basis. According to what I could observe during my fieldwork, teachers seldom sat idle. However, their time was often occupied with non-teaching work.

In light of insights from international research on teachers, we can draw a few inferences from this study. Several aspects of the policymaking process regarding teachers in Odisha are consistent with the bureaucratic view of teaching as described by Firestone & Bader (1991). This view holds that teachers encounter a limited range of problems that can be easily resolved. Therefore, rules and standardisation are recommended. From a labour perspective (Connell, 2009), early career teachers in Odisha find themselves trapped in disempowering employment contracts. Additionally, there is a sense that they are a victim of organisational power dynamics.

Participants appeared to have a high sense of self-efficacy as they perceived themselves to be competent teachers (Vielufa et al., 2013). However, in the absence of improved student learning outcomes, they have to explain the limitations of their work. There are some participants, such as Prakash, who feel more confident when their students have prior learning. We can draw three inferences from this study: teachers have a false sense of efficacy without adequate feedback and support (Elliott et al., 2010); teachers have a high level of self-efficacy, but may become frustrated in the face of obstacles preventing them from achieving their goals (Rosenholtz &

Simpson, 1990); efficacy beliefs of teachers vary, and they feel efficacious only under certain circumstances (McLaughlin, 1992).

Participants' object of commitment seems to be their own survival (Choi & Tang, 2011). They appear to have a reduced sense of responsibility for the learning of their students. This can be attributed to two sets of factors: their perception of students (the deficit view) (Diamond et al., 2004), their work contexts do not foster their commitment to students (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Their workload is often unmanageable. Due to the lack of resources, administrative support, and opportunities to participate in higher level decision-making, they feel that most of what they do is of little significance. Further, when teachers are paid differently for the same job, it creates an unfair employment situation which can make it difficult for them to maintain a commitment.

When there are multiple cadres of teachers, a teacher with low pay may view herself as an insignificant member of the larger teaching community, as Sarojini's metaphor of *gunduchi musa* suggests so insightfully. *Gunduchi musa* is the Odia term for squirrel. According to the epic Ramayana, a squirrel contributed to the construction of the bridge through the ocean that allowed Lord Rama's army to travel to Lanka. As the army of monkeys threw large stones into the ocean, the squirrel rolled on the sand while wet and shook it off at the construction site in order to transport a few grains of sand. The squirrel's contribution was apparently inconsequential and unwarranted. Although contract teachers perceive themselves as powerless, they are usually those who bear the most weight in most schools.

Based on the study conducted by Hong, Day and Greene (2018) on teacher identity, we may conclude that the participants have an unstable and negative professional identity. Instead of actively managing situations and resolving challenges, they tend to resort to coping and passively react to challenges. Classifying them as different from regular teachers (by referring

to them as *Sikhya Sahayaks*, JTCs, and JTs) also inhibits the development of their identities (McCormack & Gore, 2008). In a culture that engages teachers in a variety of activities unrelated to their core task, participants experience role conflict and develop suboptimal identities as teachers (Ramachandran et al., 2018).

Vulnerability in the lives of participants is a structural issue (Day et al., 2007; Kelchtermans, 2011). In addition to the policy of contractual employment, there are many other rules that threaten the well-being of teachers. The absence of tenure, the demands on them to perform non-teaching tasks, criticism from communities, an inability to cope, a sense of helplessness, submissiveness and compliance all place them in a vulnerable position. Teachers are instructed in minute detail about what to teach and how to teach it, indicating the government's distrust of their professional capabilities and a trend toward "teacher-proofing" education. Additionally, the expansion of reporting and administrative work also points to the risk of deprofessionalisation and deskilling of teachers (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Seddon & Palmieri, 2009). There is also the possibility of teacher demoralization when teachers are not trusted, perceive the school context as unfavourable to their goals, are expected to perform non-teaching activities most of the time, and are structurally disempowered. Apart from being excluded from major decision-making processes (technical disempowerment), teachers have little understanding of the reasoning behind many decisions, such as remedial initiatives (cognitive disempowerment) (Tsang & Liu, 2016). Most importantly, the study also found that contractual employment delays the attainment of milestones of adulthood such as home ownership, marriage, and parenthood and makes it difficult to plan for future (Cuervo & Chesters, 2019).

When teachers are more worried about security and survival, the “lower-order” needs in Maslow’s (1943, 1987) hierarchy of needs, it is difficult for them to progress towards satisfaction of “higher-order” needs such as a sense of efficacy and professional development

(Chandra, 2015). There is a connection between contracting and casualizing teaching staff and other policy solutions, including performance-based pay and increased monitoring and surveillance. These reforms are largely grounded in the discourse of new public management (Mukhopadhyay and Ali, 2021) and in recognition of their widespread implementation, they have been termed as Global Managerial Education Reforms (GMERs) (Verger and Altinyelken, 2013). The central principle guiding this package of reforms is that public sector administrators should take advantage of the rules, values, and techniques used in the private sector. As these reforms strive to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public education systems, they disempower teachers and deprofessionalise the workforce (Verger and Altinyelken, 2013). Additionally, Mukhopadhyay and Ali (2021) argue that while the new public management discourse constructs a narrow concept of teacher accountability, it rarely engages with the larger institutional context within which teachers operate. It does not address basic resource deficiencies in government schools, the involvement of teachers in numerous non-teaching activities, the low quality of preservice and in-service teacher training programs, and the lack of teacher involvement in policy-making.

The controversial nature of these reforms may cause one to wonder why governments are attracted to these reforms so strongly. First and foremost, these reforms are recommended by large and powerful international organizations, such as the World Bank. In the last decades, the World Bank has positioned itself as a producer and manager of knowledge in the domain of education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Now, as a knowledge bank, it determines what works and what does not in terms of educational development. The World Bank has been criticised for its selective use of “evidence” (Verger and Altinyelken, 2013) and short-sighted policy prescriptions (Klees, 2008). For example, for two decades before 2000, the World Bank argued that higher education had a low social return than primary education. In 2000, it admitted that

the externalities of higher education (technology development, better governance, democracy, etc.) were not taken into account in the calculation. As Klees (2008) points out:

> Thus, the Bank now admits that the returns to society from investment in higher education may be as great as or greater than for primary education. … The Bank is basically saying that it followed incorrect policies for the 1980s and 1990s, caused by a technical error, a miscalculation. How many individuals and countries have been harmed by the Bank's admitted erroneous insistence that higher education investment be curtailed and misdirected? (p. 318)

Secondly, policies such as hiring contract teachers are justified not only based on their effectiveness, but also because they do not have a significant impact on the state budget. Promoted as a "cost-effective" solution, the policy of hiring contract teachers was readily adopted by governments experiencing "budget constraints". Klees (2008) writes, "Perhaps the most disingenuous part of the justification for neoliberal policies in education and elsewhere was the creation of what the World Bank has called the "budget constraint" … The overnight "discovery" of this budget constraint or cap was pure politics" (p. 318). The case of Odisha is illustrative in this regard.

In an investigation of the dire state of health and education at the grassroots level in Odisha, journalist M. Rajshekhar has identified misplaced spending priorities as one of the contributing factors (Rajshekhar, 2015). According to his report, in the late nineties, Odisha had faced a severe financial crisis. The cyclone of 1999 had devastated the state. It was a time of low inflows, high expenditures, and excessive borrowing. The state needed 5 years to engineer a turnaround. It was during this period that the state ceased to appoint regular personnel. Since then, Odisha has maintained a conservative fiscal policy. In recent times, the government of Odisha has taken pride in its ability to consistently generate revenue surpluses (Financial Express, 2022; The New Indian Express, 2022). While the situation of the state exchequer has improved significantly over the past two decades, the situation of its contractual employees remains unchanged.

Finally, apart from the appeal of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, contractualisation of teachers is also an instrument of discipline and domination (Pedaci, 2010; Masquelier, 2019). In Bourdieu's (1998) view, precarity serves as a cover for the exercise of power: "Casualisation of employment is part of a mode of domination of a new kind, based on the creation of a generalised and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into the acceptance of exploitation" (p. 85). Pedaci (2010) suggests that occupational insecurity produces nonconflicting, if not entirely submissive, attitudes and behaviours. A contract worker is more likely to accept unfavourable conditions and perform tasks that exceed the workload that has been agreed upon. When it comes to education, it means that, as a result of the contractualisation of the teaching workforce, governments can and do implement anti-teacher policies without much resistance, thereby intensifying the work of teachers. Manisha depicted contractual employment as damaging. In addition to the loss of self-esteem, this damage may also imply a loss of agency in the face of state power. Despite teachers' disagreement with educational reforms and everyday management practices, they do not feel empowered to resist them.

9.3 Limitations and transferability

A limitation of this study in regard to the literature review is that it did not find many studies on the lives of early career teachers in India. Therefore, it was difficult to plan the study, and the research questions remained broad rather than focused. However, this approach allowed the collection of biographical narrative data and provided insight into a number of general trends (public issues) within specific cases (personal troubles).

Because of the covid-19 pandemic, I was unable to meet with and interview officials of the education bureaucracy and parents. My intention was to interview them after completing my interview with teachers in order to obtain multiple perspectives on the lives of teachers. To

compensate for this limitation, I tracked news reports on teachers, read biographies and autobiographies of teachers in Odisha and joined teachers' groups on social media. This approach helped me corroborate teachers' narratives.

Researchers must however exercise caution when considering the transferability and generalisability of the findings since many context-specific factors affect participants' experience of precarity. The majority of participants in this study were from lower middle-class families living in small towns and rural areas, and all aspired upward social mobility through government employment. It is possible that a contractual position at a decent salary would not have caused them much concern. Whether and to what extent teachers experience precarity is influenced by their family circumstances, concerns, aspirations, and nature of contracts.

This study examined how certain factors contributed collectively to the adversity and success in the lives of early career teachers. The presence of these elements in other contexts may indicate that teachers have similar experiences there as well. It is important to note, however, that since the world is an open system and human beings are reflexive agents, no outcome can be predicted in advance.

9.4 Policy implications

Even as early as in 1966 the ILO/UNESCO recommendation stated that "teaching should be regarded as a profession ... a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study" and their "salaries should ... reflect the importance to society of the teaching function" (Quoted in Robertson, 2012, p. 590, emphasis added). The blind pursuit of efficiency, competitiveness, accountability, and cost-effectiveness promoted by neoliberal policymakers and researchers has undermined the progressive ideals of education (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018) and specifically the relevance of teachers (Compton and Weiner, 2008). As

the findings of the study indicate, contractual employment contributes to teacher demoralisation and disempowerment in more than one way. Thus, with Mukhopadhyay and Ali (2021), we advocate educational reform efforts that act “with” teachers rather than “on” teachers (p. 1,302). Addressing the diverse dimensions of precarity in teachers’ lives that can augment dignity of and a sense of security among the teachers can be a great step in this regard. Policymakers may be sensitised to the adverse impacts of contractual employment on teachers. In states such as Odisha where financial constraints no longer exist, the policy of hiring contract teachers should be abolished.

Teachers' work should be viewed from a professional perspective when making educational policy. The role of supervision and standardization should be reduced, and teachers should be better prepared to make professional judgments based on their teacher education experiences and context-specific considerations. The focus of teacher management should be on better socialization of teachers, their professional development, and leadership potential. Teacher management processes (transfer, promotion, reward etc.) should be easy to understand and transparent.

The study found that teachers still hold stereotypes and prejudices about students, parents, and pedagogy. Instead of responding effectively to the challenges they face in their context, they tend to feel helpless. It indicates that teacher education fails to challenge the knowledge and prejudices of student teachers. It provides no real help to act confidently within cultural and institutional constraints. There is a need to improve teacher education in this regard. Teacher education should aim at preparing teachers for difficult situations, not ideal situations.

9.5 Recommendations for further research

In the Indian context, further research is required in regards to teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, factors that influence their self-efficacy, the relationship between the beliefs and efforts of

teachers, and strategies for promoting teachers' self-efficacy. This research is expected to pave ways for further explorations of whether the discourse of teacher criticism negatively impacts experienced teachers as well and how teachers' struggle for a positive professional identity influences children's learning outcome. Further research is needed to explore whether and how the discourse of teacher criticism influences senior government teachers and teachers working in supposedly better government schools (such as the model schools of the state governments and the schools funded by the central government). More quantitative studies are required to measure various aspects of teachers' identity and their relationship to learning outcomes. The impact of the discourse of teacher criticism on the status and prestige of teaching also needs to be studied. It is also indicated in the study that teachers in India are at risk of demoralisation and disillusionment. There is a need for further research in this area.

Given the limited amount of research available concerning the effects of contractual employment on teachers, future studies may explore the extent and nature of precarity in the lives of contract teachers in diverse contexts. It is important to know whether strict enforcement of contract norms by dismissing non-performing teachers has the effect of incentivizing them, as the proponents of contract teacher hiring policy claim (Bruns et al., 2011; Kingdon et al., 2013), or it places them in more precarious positions as the present study indicates. Most importantly, as Lorey (2015), suggests, we need to investigate the "cracks and potentials for resistance", the "counter-conducts" that subvert the disciplinary power of the mode of governance through precarisation (pp. 2–4).

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Annexure 1

Questionnaire and interview guide

PERSONAL				
Name				
Gender				
Age				
Social category				
Education				
Level	Degree	School/college/Institute/University	Year	Achievement
HSC				
+2				
Graduation				
PG				
MPhil./Ph.D.				
Diploma				
Teacher Training				
Distance Learning				

FAMILY		
Family Type	Joint Family	Nuclear Family
No. of Members		

		Education	Occupation
Parents	Father		
	Mother		

		Age	Gender		
Siblings	1				
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
Other members	1				
	2				
	3				

Marital Status		Married	Unmarried
If Married	Year		
	Education of Spouse		
	Occupation of spouse		

Do you have kids?				Yes	No
		Age	Gender	Education- class	Which school/college
If Yes	1				
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				

Residence							
Kindly provide a list of the all the places where you have lived for about one year or more till now.							
Sl. No.	Location	Your age/period	Type of the place				Details
1			V	ST	LT	C	
2			V	ST	LT	C	
3			V	ST	LT	C	
4			V	ST	LT	C	
5			V	ST	LT	C	
6			V	ST	LT	C	
7			V	ST	LT	C	
V=Village, ST= Small Town (Like Block/Subdivision HQs), LT= Large Towns (Like Dist. HQs), C= City							

Permanent Address				
Type	Village	Small Town	Large Town	City
Present Address				
Type	Village	Small Town	Large Town	City
School Address				
Type	Village	Small Town	Large Town	City

Distance between your school and your living place		
How do you commute?		
Is public transport available?	Yes	No
If yes, what are the options available?		
Timings/Frequencies?		
Quality?		
Do you prefer using these facilities? Why or why not?		

ASSETS			
Sl. No.	Asset	Available?	How Many?
1	Television with Setup Box		
2	Refrigerator		
3	Washing Machine		
4	Bicycle		
5	Motor Cycle		
6	Four-Wheeler		
7	Smartphone		
8	Computer/Laptop/Tablet		
9	Land		

CAREER			
How many total years have you been employed as a teacher?			
What were you doing before becoming a teacher?			
		Tick	Details- where and when
1	College Student		
2	Teacher Training Student		
3	Preparing for competitive exams		
4	Preparing for higher education		
5	Employed		
6	Homemaker		
7	Farming		
8	Business		
9	Anything Else		
Previous Teaching experience, if any			

	Previous School(s)	Type of school	Period	Reason for leaving
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

When did you become a probationary teacher in a government school?	

Posting details as probationary teacher

Sl. No.	Name of the School	Type of School	Type of place	Period	Reasons of transfer
1					
2					
3					

What subjects have you taught throughout your teaching career?

Sl. No.	Subject	Class	School
1			
2			
3			
4			

What are the responsibilities you have taken other than teaching throughout your teaching career?

Sl. No.	Responsibility	Details	When and where
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

CURRENT JOB				
School Name				
School Type				
Year of posting in this school				
Designation				

Current Job Responsibility			
Teaching			Non-teaching
Sl. No.	Subject	Class	
1			
2			
3			
4			

Familiarity with colleagues			
Sl. No.	Name	What do they teach	Their educational background
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Regular Reading Habit				
Sl. No.	Reading Material	Specify	When	Where
1	Newspaper			

2	Magazine			
3	Textbook			
4	Literature			
5	Anything else			
What do you do for fun?				
Sl. No.	Activity	Specify	When	How often
1	Watching TV			
2	Listening to Music			
3	YouTube			
4	Internet browsing			
5	Social Media			
6	Talking			
7	Physical exercise			
8	Reading			
9	Anything else			

Interview guide

Theme	Question/Data Source
Career Decision - Initial Motivation - Initial assumptions - Influencing factors	- How did you become a teacher? - What motivated you then? What other options were available to you? - How did you imagine teaching career at that point? - Was there anyone who guided you? Is anyone in this occupation from your family?
Preparation and Recruitment	- Did you avail preservice training? - Brief educational/career trajectory up to training. - Nature of the training – type, duration, when, where. - Stories from training period - What did you do after training till recruitment? - The recruitment process. - Where did you get posting? How did you arrange accommodation?
Socialisation in teaching workforce - Induction	First impressions. - How was the place like when you came here? - What was your job responsibility initially? Easy/Difficult? - How did you learn about the culture of the school? How teachers and students behave here? - How is this school different from the school which you went to when you were a kid? - Do you think your first impressions have changed?
- Identity/self	- Self-image: How would you describe yourself? - Self-esteem: How do you feel about yourself? Do you feel confident? - Task Perception: What you should be doing? - Future perspective: What do you wish to achieve/ accomplish in your life? - Possible selves: How do you imagine yourself in future?
- Working conditions	- Do you think the infrastructure is enough? Do you have enough resources? - Do you believe that the teachers with whom you work are motivated? - Do you like this environment? What else can be done to make it better? - How are the children here? Strength? Composition? Absenteeism? Unruly? How do you see their future?

	- How are the parents? Cooperative? Indifferent? - How would you describe this village?
Professionalism - Power, Authority, Autonomy - Professional Knowledge - Effectiveness, commitment, competency	- Who decides? Your pedagogical approaches? Ways of assessing your students? Curriculum? Your workload? Your professional development? - Are there detailed instructions for teaching each and every lesson? - To what extent you are bound to follow the instructions? Do you have flexibility to decide what is best for your students? - Do you feel like an expert? How do you evaluate yourself? - Do you think that your autonomy is increasing/decreasing over time? - What are the characteristics of an ideal teacher? - Your views on examination, Ujjwala, punishment
- Opportunity for growth: In-service training and Promotion	- Explore the official discourse of teacher development - -Are these training programs effective? - Are trainings compulsory? How often you attend? What is taught here? Logistics- food, travel, accommodation. - Do you feel trainings are good? Necessary? - How training programs can be made even better? - How are teachers promoted? What is your career plan? How are you preparing yourself?
- Accountability - Reward, punishment, feedback - Status, prestige	- When a teacher works sincerely how is she rewarded? Motivation for doing good work? - Do you get feedback? - When a teacher violates a rule? - Do you think that the profession attracts bright students? Is it an esteemed occupation? How do people think? Status in marriage market? - Would you advise somebody to choose this career?
Job Satisfaction	- How is teaching different from other jobs? What are the perks? - Most satisfying aspect?

Issues in the job - Bureaucratisation, paper work - Workload, division of labour - Micropolitics - Regime of discipline	- How much non-teaching work you have to do? How often? Describe how you deal with it. - Do you think anything is wrong with government's teacher management policy? - How are your colleagues? What do you usually talk? Closeness? Support? Conflicts? - How the HM affects your work? - Are there Senior teachers here? Do you think there is any difference in thinking?
- Stress, coping mechanisms	- Do you feel stressed? How often? What are the sources of stress? - What is the role of smartphone in your life? Pros and cons? - Most frustrating aspect of your job?
- Salary	- How much is your salary? Initially? Now? Monthly expenditure pattern? - Regularity? How do you manage when you don't get it on time? - Other sources of earning? - Long term financial goals?
- Harassment - Discrimination	- Do you feel discriminated as a probationary teacher?
- Transfer	- Do you need? How have you tried? Likely in future? Obstacles? How are other teachers dealing?
Teacher Vulnerability -	Critical Incidents/Key Experiences/Turning Points - Sources - How do they experience? - How do they cope?
Political Orientation - Union	- Are you part of any union? Nature of participation? Meetings? Contribution? Strikes? Do you justify?
Cultural Politics of Teaching	- Feminisation of teaching. Why? Good? - How being a female or minority affects your career?
Influences -	Critical Incidents/Key Experiences/Turning Points - Role models - Reference Group - Significant others
Wellbeing - Living Conditions	- How is your typical day? Holidays? - Out of classroom activities?

- Health - Hobby - Intellectual starvation - Social Involvement	- Any health issues? - Do you feel safe? - Hobbies? Do you get time for these pursuits? - Do you like reading? What do you read usually? - Involvement in any movement? Politics? Religious? NGO?
- Emotional state	- What's the most boring aspect of your job? Most interesting? What makes you happy on an everyday basis? When you feel afraid? When you experience anger? Frustration?
- Family life	- How did you family respond when you got this job? How are they feeling now?
	- What are your responsibilities at home? No. of dependents? Children's education? Where and why? - Do you get any help from other members of your family? - Do you get sufficient time for your children? For spouse and other members? For friends and relatives? - For recreational activities? - How does your work interfere your personal life and how does your personal life affect your work-life? - Family expectations? Gift obligations? Financial issues?
Concluding remarks	- Are you planning for a career change? Why not? - What is your biggest concern at this point in your life? - Do you think you have achieved what you wanted when you were growing up? - What should be changed to make your life better?

Annexure 2

Permission from DEO, Keonjhar for fieldwork

DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE, KEONJHAR

PHONE: - 06766-255586(O), 06766-253015(MDM) FAX: - 06766-255587
E-MAIL: - deokeonjhar18@gmail.com

No. 7881.. Date 26.09.. 2018
IPE-184-18

To

Block Education Officer,
Keonjhar Sadar/Champua/Patna/Jhumpura/Joda

Headmaster/Headmistress,

(List enclosed)

Sub: Regarding co-operation in collecting data

Sir, /Madam,

As per request of the Chairperson Dr.Pranaya Kumar Swain, School Humanities and Social Science, National Institution of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, I am to inform you that Mr.Biswajit Apat shall visit your school to collect certain data. Please extend co-operation to Sri Apat in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

District Education Officer, Keonjhar

Memo No 7882 /Date. 26.09.18

Copy forwarded to the Dr.Pranaya Kumar Swain, Chairperson, School of Humanities and Social Science National Institution of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, Jatani, Dist-Khurdha,Odisah -752050 for information with reference to letter No. Nil dated.07.09.2018.

District Education Officer, Keonjhar

Annexure 3

Oral informed consent script

(In English and Odia)

- **Introduction:** My name is Biswajit Apat. I'm currently doing my PhD research in NISER, Bhubaneswar. I am a student of Sociology.
- **Project details and aims**: In my study, I want to explore the lives of primary school teachers. I'm particularly interested in teachers who are not yet regularised. I got the list of all such teachers in this block from the DEO. I have randomly selected a sample of teachers to interview. The DEO has kindly permitted me to visit schools and meet the teachers in my sample. I have come to meet you because your name is in the sample. If you choose to be a part of this project, here is what will happen:
- **Interview description**: I will have three conversations with you which may take about an hour each. We can fix suitable timings for our meetings. I will ask a range of questions about your work-life (how do you feel as a teacher, your hopes, aims, frustrations), how teaching has affected your personal life and your opinions on a few educational issues.
- **Data confidentiality**: I will treat your responses as data of my research. Everything you say will be de-identified. Pseudonyms will be used for all the names. I will ensure that the readers of the publications generated out of my research should not be able to identify any of the participants.
- **Audio Recording:** With your permission, I would like to make an audio recording of our discussion to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of the interview. The audio recordings will be stored in a local database. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview. The audio recordings will be deleted after that.
- **Risks and Benefits**: The interviews will be time-consuming. Please let me know when we should stop. You may find some of the topics of our discussion discomforting to you. You can choose not to answer any questions you don't want to. You can also alert me to pause for a break or stop the interview altogether. There will be no direct or personal benefit to you from taking part in this research. Our discussions may serve as an occasion for you to reflect on your work and life.
- **Rights**: Your participation is completely voluntary. You can ask me questions without any hesitation. You can withdraw yourself and your responses from the research anytime you want. You can ask me to share with you the research outputs.
- **Questions/ concerns**: Do you have any questions?

ନମସ୍କାର । ମୋ ନାଁ ବିଶ୍ୱଜିତ ଆପଟ । ମୁଁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ନାଇଜର, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ପିଏଚ୍.ଡି ଗବେଷଣା କରୁଛି । ମୁଁ ସମାଜ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ କରେ । ମୋ ଗବେଷଣାଟି ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟଗୁଡିକରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରତ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ଉପରେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟବେସିତ । ଯେଉଁ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀମାନେ ନୂଆ କରି ଚାକିରୀରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଏଯାଏଁ ରେଗୁଲାର ହୋଇନାହାନ୍ତି, କେବଳ ସେହିମାନେ ହିଁ ଏହି ଗବେଷଣାରେ ସହାୟତା କରିପାରିବେ । ଏହି ବ୍ଲକରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ତାଲିକା ମୁଁ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଶିକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକାରୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟରୁ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିଛି । ସେହି ତାଲିକାରୁ କେତେଜଣଙ୍କ ସହ କଥାହେବା ପାଇଁ କିଛି ନାଁ ସ୍ଥିର କରିଛି । ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଶିକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକାରୀ ସ୍କୁଲଗୁଡିକୁ ଯାଇ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପ କରିବାକୁ ମୋତେ ଅନୁମତି ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଅନୁମତି ଚିଠିଟି ଆପଣ ପଢି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ଆପଣ ଯଦି ମୋ ଗବେଷଣାରେ ଅଂଶଗ୍ରହଣ କରନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ସହ ଆପଣଙ୍କ କାମ ଓ ଜୀବନ ବିଷୟରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ହେବି । ମୁଁ ପଚାରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିବା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଗୁଡିକର ଏକ ତାଲିକା ଆଣିଛି । ଆପଣ ସେଗୁଡିକ ପଢିନିଅନ୍ତୁ । ମୁଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିବାକୁ ମୋଟ ତିନି ଥର ଆସିବି । ପ୍ରତି ଥର ପ୍ରାୟ ଏକ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଯାଏ ଆମେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ହେବା । ଆପଣ ନିଜ ସୁବିଧା ହିସାବରେ ମୋତେ ସମୟ ଦେବେ ।

ଆପଣ ଅନୁମତି ଦେଲେ ଆମ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପଗୁଡିକୁ ମୁଁ ଅଡିଓ ରେକର୍ଡ କରିବି । ରେକର୍ଡିଂଗୁଡିକୁ ମୁଁ ଯେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ସମ୍ଭବ ଲେଖାରେ ପରିଣତ କରିଦେବି । ଲେଖିବା ସମୟରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ନାଁ, ସ୍କୁଲ ନାଁ, ଆପଣ କହିଥିବା ସବୁ ଲୋକ ତଥା ଜାଗା ନାଁ ବଦଳେଇ ଦିଆଯିବ ଯଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପ ପଢି କେହି ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନଟ କରିପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଲେଖିସାରିବା ପରେ ରେକର୍ଡିଂଗୁଡିକ ଡିଲିଟ୍ କରିଦିଆଯିବ ।

ଦୟାକରି ଜାଣିରଖନ୍ତୁ ଯେ, ଏହି ଗବେଷଣାରେ ଅଂଶଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ମୋତେ ସମୟ ଦେବାକୁ ହେବ । ଯଦି କୌଣସି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ଆପଣ ଦେବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନାହାନ୍ତି ବା କୌଣସି ବିଷୟରେ କଥା ହେବାକୁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଅସ୍ୱସ୍ତିବୋଧ ହୁଏ, ମୋତେ ଜଣାଇବେ, ଆମେ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ବିଷୟକୁ ଯିବା । ଯଦି କିଛି କାମ ଆସିଯାଏ ବା ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି କାରଣରୁ ଆପଣ ଯିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ, ଆମେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ସେଇଠି ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦେବା । ଏହି ଗବେଷଣାରେ ଆପଣ ଅଂଶଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବେ କି ନାହିଁ, ଆପଣ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନଭାବେ ନିର୍ଣ୍ଣୟ ନିଅନ୍ତୁ । ଏଥିରେ ସିଧାସଳଖ ଭାବେ ଆପଣଙ୍କର କିଛି ଲାଭ ବା କ୍ଷତି ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ମୋ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଗୁଡିକ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ନିଜ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଜୀବନ ଉପରେ ଭାବିବା ପାଇଁ ହୁଏତ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରେ ।

ଆମେ କଥାହେବା ସମୟରେ ଆପଣ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୋତେ କିଛି ପଚାରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ପଚାରିପାରିବେ । ମୁଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପରି ଆହୁରି କେତେଜଣ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପ କରିବି । ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତରଗୁଡିକୁ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରି ମୋତେ ସନ୍ଦର୍ଭ ଲେଖିବାକୁ ହେବ । ଆମ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତାକୁ ଭିତ୍ତିକରି ମୁଁ ଯାହା ସବୁ ଲେଖାଲେଖି କରିବି ଆପଣ ଚାହିଁଲେ ମୋତେ ମାଗିପାରିବେ । ପ୍ରକାଶନ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆପଣ ପଢିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ ମୁଁ ଲେଖାମାନ ଯୋଗାଇଦେଇ ପାରିବି ।

ଆଶାକରୁଛି ଆପଣ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେଇପାରିବେ । ଯଦି କିଛି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଥାଏ, ନିସଙ୍କୋଚ ହୋଇ ପଚାରନ୍ତୁ ।