

Report on the RECOUP ‘Political Economy of Education in India’ project

by
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The subject of our study is teachers’ participation in teacher-union and political activities as well as the role of teachers and their organizations in matters such as education related litigation, teachers’ participation in elections, corruption in board examinations and reasons for any disciplinary actions on teachers. There is no systematic research on these issues in India, though there are frequent newspaper reports on some of these issues.

We framed a preliminary teacher questionnaire in 2006-07 based on our own experience. As these issues have never been researched in India using primary data, there is no existing survey of teachers which our questionnaire could build on. We started from scratch, based on our research questions and hypotheses. We benefited from consulting some existing surveys internationally, e.g. surveys on detecting corruption (by Pedro Vicente, CSAE, Oxford).

We lightly pilot tested the preliminary questionnaire twice in two districts of Uttar Pradesh (in Dec. 2006 and March 2007). This helped but it also showed that the questionnaire would need many iterations of improvements since we are asking previously untested and highly sensitive questions. Between October and December 2007, we extensively improved and pilot-tested the RECOUP teacher survey in several rounds of iterations. These involved :

- 1) Three day pilot testing with MM and GK and personnel from the data collection firm (SUNAI PVT. LTD) in Lucknow in October (GK’s visit was paid for by a World Bank conference attendance grant). The discussions about the questions benefited from the participation of Mr. Sarvendra Vikram Singh, a senior education official in Uttar Pradesh. SUNAI implemented all agreed changes.
- 2) Two day further improvement of questionnaire in mid-December in light of comments received by GK from Rukmini Banerji.
- 3) Two day pilot testing of improved questionnaire with 7 teachers in Patna city, with SUNAI; a 1 hour audio-conference between GK, Rukmini Banerji, Pranav Chaudhary (owner of SUNAI) and enumerators to discuss results of the pilot. Improvements incorporated in the questionnaire by SUNAI.
- 4) Extensive pilot testing of the questionnaire on 26-27 December with 54 completed forms in several villages of rural UP and Bihar; collation of responses, question-by-question. 2.5 hour audio conference with all enumerators at SUNAI headquarters in Patna, to go through the pilot experience and discuss the responses question by question. This led to further clarification of some questions and improvement and streamlining of questionnaire.

We hired the data collection firm SUNAI Pvt. Ltd. in Patna to conduct the survey. The survey has gone into the field on 3rd January 2008. We are very excited about the data that this survey will yield. The survey is expected to be completed by mid-February 2008. If the computer entry of data can be completed by end of February, MM and GK will discuss the findings in late February-March 2008. The survey questionnaire is attached.