Making Bureaucracy Work

What makes bureaucracy work for the least advantaged? Across the world, countries have adopted policies for universal primary education. Yet, policy implementation is uneven and not well understood. Making Bureaucracy Work investigates when and how public agencies deliver primary education in rural India. Through a multi-level comparative analysis and more than two years of ethnographic field research, Mangla opens the “black box” of Indian bureaucracy to demonstrate how differences in bureaucratic norms – informal rules that guide public officials and their everyday relations with citizens – generate divergent implementation patterns and outcomes. While some public agencies operate in a legalistic manner and promote compliance with policy rules, others engage in deliberation and encourage flexible problem-solving with local communities, thereby enhancing the quality of education services. This book reveals the complex ways bureaucratic norms interact with socioeconomic inequalities on the ground, illuminating the possibilities and obstacles for bureaucracy to promote inclusive development.

Akshay Mangla is Associate Professor of International Business at Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford. He specializes in comparative politics, political economy of development, public institutions, education, social welfare and South Asia.
Education and its reform are matters of great political salience throughout the world. Yet as Gift and Wibbels observed, “It is hard to identify a community of political scientists who are dedicated to the comparative study of education.” This series is an effort to change that. The goal is to encourage a vigorous line of scholarship that focuses squarely on the politics of education across nations, advances theoretical thinking, includes a broad swath of educational terrain – from elementary and secondary education to vocational education to higher education – and explores the impacts of education on key aspects of society. The series welcomes books of very different types. Some may be grounded in sophisticated quantitative analysis, but qualitative work is welcome as well, as are big-think extended essays that develop agenda-setting ideas. Work is encouraged that takes on big, important, inherently messy topics, however difficult they may be to study. Work is also encouraged that shows how the politics of education is shaped by power, special interests, parties, bureaucracies and other fundamentals of the political system. And finally, this series is not just about the developed nations, but encourages new work on developing nations and the special challenges that education faces in those contexts.

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Norms, Education and Public Service
Delivery in Rural India

AKSHAY MANGLA
University of Oxford
For my parents
Arun Kumar Mangla and Malti Mangla
who taught me the value of education
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Acknowledgments

The ideas for this book saw their first rays of light in the summer of 2006. As a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) intern, I was researching child labor interventions in the carpet belt districts of Uttar Pradesh. I had not intended to write about India’s primary school system. However, from fieldwork I learned that many children were neither engaged in work nor attending school, a residual category of “nowhere children,” which the Government of India’s decadal census fails to see. My conversations with households made it clear that parents had high hopes for their children and took significant steps to support their education. Yet, when visiting rural primary schools, I was struck by the chasm between citizens’ aspirations and the actual services they received. To understand this disconnect, I consulted studies of rural state–society relations and social welfare, particularly Myron Weiner’s *The Child and the State in India* and James Scott’s *Weapons of the Weak*. The influence of these scholars reverberates throughout this book.

In the pages that follow, readers will encounter parents, schoolteachers, village leaders, women’s association members, social activists and elected officials. Most of all, they will learn about civil servants, including officials from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) as well as local bureaucrats, who hold the fate of so many children in their hands. These research participants, most of whom must go unnamed, provided raw materials for the book’s arguments. They generously gave their time and candor during interviews. They shared meals and (too many) cups of chai, offering me a window into the social life of public institutions and village schools. The debts I have incurred to them are beyond repayment. I can only hope that this study does justice to their experiences.
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Abbreviations

ASER  Annual Status of Education Report
BDO  Block Development Officer
BEO  Block Education Officer
BEP  Bihar Education Project
BGVS  Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti
BIMARU  Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh
BJP  Bharatiya Janata Party
BPL  Below Poverty Line
BSA  Basic Shiksha Adhikari (see DEO)
BSP  Bahujan Samaj Party
CPM  Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DC  District Collector
DEO  District Education Officer
DIET  District Institute of Education and Training
DISE  District Information System of Education
DM  District Magistrate
DPEP  District Primary Education Programme
GER  Gross enrollment ratio
GOI  Government of India
HGVS  Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samiti
HP  Himachal Pradesh
IMF  International Monetary Fund
INC  Indian National Congress
JDU  Janata Dal United
KGBV  Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
KSSP  Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MDM  Midday Meal Programme
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<td>MHRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Human Resource Development</td>
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<td>MSUP</td>
<td>Mahila Samakhya Uttar Pradesh</td>
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<td>NCERT</td>
<td>National Council of Educational Research and Training</td>
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<td>NFHS</td>
<td>National Family Health Survey</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>NIEPA</td>
<td>National Institute of Education Planning and Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPE</td>
<td>National Policy on Education</td>
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<td>NPEGEL</td>
<td>National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level</td>
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<td>OBC</td>
<td>Other Backward Classes/Other Backward Castes</td>
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<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institution</td>
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<td>PROBE</td>
<td>Public Report on Basic Education</td>
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<td>RJD</td>
<td>Rashtriya Janata Dal</td>
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<td>RTE</td>
<td>Right to Education (Act)</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<td>SCERT</td>
<td>State Council of Educational Research and Training</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Group</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Samajwadi Party</td>
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<td>SPD</td>
<td>State Project Director (for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan)</td>
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<td>ST</td>
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<td>UKD</td>
<td>Uttarakhhand Kranti Dal</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>USN</td>
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