

**A philanthropic fix to education?
A case study of a corporate foundation in India**

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Abstract

The involvement of private philanthropic actors in education in developing countries has grown significantly in recent years. While it is the subject of much conceptual discussion, there are few in-depth studies examining the actions and influence of these actors. This MA thesis responds to that gap by conducting a case study of one elementary education program (the Satya Bharti School program) in Rajasthan, India run by the Bharti Foundation, a major Indian corporate foundation and philanthropic arm of Indian telecommunications conglomerate, Bharti Group. The study examined the Foundation's objectives, and how it mediated and influenced regulatory frameworks for elementary education to achieve these objectives, using the embedded sub-case of the Satya Bharti School program in Rajasthan.

It found that the Bharti Foundation aimed to operate as an “institutional entrepreneur” (DiMaggio, 1988) by positioning itself as a “quality expert” in education, and promoting its particular conceptualization of quality education—captured in the Satya Bharti School program—as a template of change for elementary education in India. Battilana et al.'s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship was used to determine how the Foundation pursued this objective. This model draws on new institutional theory, specifically the literature on embedded agency and institutional change, to explain the institutional conditions and actions organizations can take to initiate divergent changes in the institutional framework of a field.

This study found some evidence that the Foundation was successful in positioning itself as an education expert and instigating institutional change in elementary education in Rajasthan. It concludes that the Foundation harnessed three enabling processes and factors to accomplish this: (1) mobilizing frames that drew on the Foundation's association with a successful knowledge-economy related company; (2) state-enabled space through public-private partnership arrangements; and (3) the Foundation's unique organizational position at the intersection of the institutional fields of business, education and philanthropy.

This was a field-based study. Fieldwork took place in fall 2012. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary analysis at different sites, including the Bharti Foundation's headquarters, field offices, and SBS schools in rural Rajasthan.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

BALA: Buildings as learning aids

CCE: Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CORD: Collaborative Research and Dissemination

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

DISE: District Information System for Education

EFA: Education for All

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

ICT: Information and communications technology

LFP: Low-fee private (schools)

MHRD: Ministry of Human Resource Development

MOU: Memorandum of understanding

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NGO: Non-government organization

NSP: Non-state private (actor)

OBC: Other backward classes

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

PPP: Public-private partnership

PUA: Private unaided (school)

REI: Rajasthan Education Initiative

RTE: Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

SBS: Satya Bharti School (Program)

SC: Scheduled caste

SMC: School management committee

SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abiyhan

ST: Scheduled tribe

TLM: Teaching-learning material

UN: United Nations

Chapter 1: Introduction

“It is just like running a business.”

-Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Vice-Chairman of Bharti Group, on the success of the Bharti Foundation’s Satya Bharti School Program (Economic Times Now, 2013)

1.1 Problem

Emerging reports indicate that domestic philanthropy in India’s education sector has increased substantially in recent decades. While philanthropy in education precedes Indian independence (Dulany & Winder, 2001), the recent *India Philanthropy Report* (Bain & Company, 2012) reveals that a 50% increase in the country’s philanthropic giving between 2006 and 2011 was chiefly channeled through the activities of private foundations. The majority of them name national education as the top priority for grant-making and programming. The education sector has continued to receive attention in recent years, attracting almost three quarters of private donations from Indian philanthropists in 2013 (Bain & Company, 2013). As a key driver of this trend, new millionaire and corporate givers in India such as Azim Premji, founder of domestic software corporation Wipro, and telecommunications conglomerate Bharti Group, have fostered their own eponymous foundations with the objective of addressing key domestic challenges in basic education for children from disadvantaged communities (BF, 2015a; M. Goyal & Jayakshankar, 2010a; Raghunathan, 2011).

While the growth of private foundation involvement in India’s basic education sector has received wide media coverage both in India and abroad (M. Goyal & Jayakshankar, 2010a; Karunakaran, 2011; The Hindu, 2011), Srivastava and Oh (2010) note a marked lack of systematic, comparable studies on the topic on developing countries, including on India. In the wake of heated debates on a parallel trend of growing private foundation involvement in public education throughout ‘Western’/ ‘Northern’ societies (Ball, 2008; Gaudini, 2003; Rogers, 2011; Saltman, 2010), and a growing literature critically examining the consequences of a “new style” of more business-like philanthropy emerging worldwide (Bishop & Green, 2008; Bosworth, 2011; Edwards, 2008), this lack of scholarship on the Indian experience highlights a need for empirical research and critical analysis.

More recently, a number of scholars are raising concerns about the amount of influence philanthropy is exerting in education (Ball & Olmedo, 2011; Bhanji, 2009; Lorenzo-Molo, 2009; Olmedo, 2013; Sidel, 2008) as philanthropic actors begin to occupy new space in education delivery, in both advanced and emerging/developing economies. Concurrently, philanthropic actors and their supporters have developed key legitimizing discourses to support this increasing involvement, which face a growing body of contestation from scholars who question the empirical credibility and logic underpinning their arguments. This thesis takes its starting point from these scholarly discussions.

1.2 Objective and research questions

This study contributes to a larger project headed by Prof. Prachi Srivastava, funded by a grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). One of the aims of the larger project is to investigate the role of non-state private actors (NSPs) in education in India. The primary objective of this MA study is to critically investigate the nature of the engagement of one philanthropic actor in India and its influence in the provision of elementary education. As a first-time researcher, I was motivated to explore this topic due to previous research I conducted on non-state organizations and education in post-conflict contexts. It raised questions about power and organizational change that resonate with current debates on non-state providers and philanthropy in education.

Specifically, this thesis provides an exploratory case study of a major elementary education program in India run by a leading domestic private foundation, the Bharti Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Indian telecommunications giant, Bharti Group of Companies. Through an embedded case study approach, the study examines the Bharti Foundation's *Satya Bharti School* (SBS) program.¹ In order to provide an in-depth snapshot of the program's implementation, this study focused on the Bharti Foundation's engagement in Rajasthan. Rajasthan is the only state in which SBS elementary schools were run under two different models during the timeframe of this study, i.e., adopting government schools and establishing free private schools.

¹ Satya is a Hindi term meaning "truth". Bharti refers to the name of the founder of Bharti Group, Sunil Bharti Mittal.

The study was framed by the research questions below. Research questions were informed by gaps and insights in the existing literature on private foundations and their influence in education.

1. What are the Bharti Foundation's objectives in operating the SBS program?
 - a. What are the Foundation's strategies for achieving these objectives?
 - b. How are they realized in practice?

2. What are the regulatory institutions (rules, policies and enforcement mechanisms) that enable or constrain the SBS program in Rajasthan?

3. How does the Bharti Foundation interact with/mediate this institutional framework?
 - a. Does the Foundation change it? How?

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 provides key contextual information of relevance to the study. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on philanthropic engagement in education in developing countries, and describes how new institutional theory was used to build a conceptual framework for analysis. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology employed. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 outline the findings from the study concerning the Foundation's influence in elementary education in Rajasthan by conceptualizing the Bharti Foundation as an "institutional entrepreneur." The concluding chapter summarizes key findings and suggests an agenda for future research.

Chapter 2: Context

This chapter provides an overview of key contextual issues of pertinence to the study. First, it briefly profiles the Bharti Foundation and the SBS program, focusing on its models of implementation. Second, it summarizes key developments and challenges in education in India, and Rajasthan specifically, concluding with a discussion on the state policy context of the SBS program in Rajasthan.

2.1 Philanthropy for education in India: History and trends

Philanthropy in Indian education has a long history, reflecting the country's unique cultural and religious context (Pushpa, 1996). Sundar (2013) argues that charity was an ingrained feature of many Indian merchant communities in the nineteenth century, which were often deeply religious, and involved acts from the dedication of public wells and tanks, to the distribution of food to the economically disadvantaged. The years following Indian independence saw the expansion of industrial communities and India's entrepreneurial base. Around this period, the Gandhian notion of "trusteeship" became popular amongst the business class. This notion held that it was the duty of businesspeople to transform the order of society from capitalist to egalitarian by acting as trustees of their wealth, using their expertise to increase it, while also using it for the service of society (Pushpa, 1996). This period thus witnessed an increasing number of deeply religious, conservative business leaders who saw "industrial leadership as their mission or moral duty, and their performance of this duty itself a philanthropic act" (Pushpa, 1996, p. 121).

A key figure in this movement was Sir Jamsetji Tata, a steel baron, who has been deemed "the father of modern Indian philanthropy" (Sundar, 2013, p. 103). The Tatas introduced a pension fund, free medical aid, schooling for their employees' children, and maternity benefits for their employees (Sundar, 2013). The Tatas' biggest contribution was the establishment of the Indian Institute of Science in 1898, widely regarded as India's finest institute in its field. Other major industrialists, including the Wadia and Chhotalal families also began large philanthropic schemes for their surrounding communities, including activities in education (particularly, technical education) and education for women (Sood & Arora, 2006).

This increase in philanthropy waned slightly in the 1980s due to slowing industrial growth, increasing government controls on industry, a high tax regime, and the rise of expensive licenses for certain industrial activities (Chakrabarty, 2011). However, by 1990, nearly all of India's 100 top-grossing companies had some kind of community philanthropy program (Sundar, 2013). Companies also began to expand their programs beyond the immediate vicinity of where they worked, in particular, reaching out to the rural population (Chakrabarty, 2011).

In 1991, India's New Economic Policy ushered in a series of neoliberal reforms influenced by the World Bank's structural adjustment programs, promoting market liberalization and state withdrawal from industry. This laid the foundation for the transformation of India into a 'knowledge economy.' This term refers to the country's ongoing shift in the main areas of its investment, trade and employment from manufacturing and/or agriculture to sectors such as information and technology, reorienting knowledge production toward the amount of profit it can bring to national GDP (Kamat, 2011). India's rise as a knowledge economy is most greatly symbolized in its booming information and communications technology (ICT) sector, which grew exponentially in the 1990s (Upadhyaya, 2004), bringing budding ICT companies such as Bharti Airtel and other Bharti Group of Companies subsidiaries with it.

The ICT industry came to represent the new economy, growing from \$USD 150 million in 1991 to \$USD 100 billion by 2007 (Ministry of Communications Information Technology India, 2013), and contributing over 10% to India's GDP in 2012 (Ministry of Communications Information Technology India, 2013). This permitted entrepreneurs to gross unprecedented levels of wealth in a short period of time, and saw the rise of a new business class alongside the traditional industrial elites (Mitra, 2007). As India witnessed an increase in the number of domestic billionaires from just one in 1990, to 49 by 2010 (Sundar, 2013), global forces also began to come into play. For example, billionaires Bill Gates and Warren Buffet visited India in March 2011 to encourage Indian billionaires to follow suit in pledging a large portion of their wealth to philanthropy (Sundar, 2013).

Several studies specifically note a recent increase in the scale of private foundation involvement in India's primary education system as a result of this increased wealth (Bain & Company, 2012; Bhanji, 2014; Mital, 2009; Sidel, 2008). For example, some studies detail the Bharti Foundation's role in fostering rural schools (Mital, 2009) or the Azim Premji Foundation's large donations to public education systems (Bain & Company, 2012; van Fleet, 2011a). Johnson

(2003) argues that “primary education is the focus of almost every new corporate and family foundation” (p. 7) in India. Sidel (2008) similarly labels primary education the “ground zero” (p. 7) of India’s growing philanthropic sector. Importantly, he labels this philanthropy “new economy philanthropy” (p. 1) and ties it to corporations or individuals with a stake in India’s knowledge economy. The Hurun Report’s “India Philanthropy List” lists 31 Indians who donated more than Rs. 100 million in 2012 (Hurun Report, 2013). Education claimed the largest share of Indian philanthropy that year, with a total of Rs. 122 million, a large portion of which came from software billionaire Azim Premji (Srivastava & Baur, forthcoming). International philanthropic actors are also active in education in India, such as the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, though systematic information is not readily available on the size of their activities.

Recent national policy developments could further boost corporate funds directed toward education. India’s *Companies Act, 2013* mandates that all companies operating in India and earning over a certain amount must ensure that “at least 2 percent of the average net profits of the company made during the three immediately preceding financial years” is allocated to corporate social responsibility [CSR] (Parliament of India, 2013, schedule VIII (ii)).² Under the Act, which came into force after the field research for this study, activities relating to the “promotion of education” qualify as one of the nine core areas eligible for CSR spending (Parliament of India, 2013, schedule VIII (ii)). This new regulation is expected to unlock \$USD 3.7 billion of private funding to social sectors by the end of 2015 (Bain & Company, 2014).

There are indications that expanding domestic philanthropic engagement in basic education may be a trend across the South, particularly in emerging economies (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Ball, 2012a; Bhanji & Oxley, 2013; Parente, 2012). One study reveals that 35 percent of corporate philanthropy in Pakistan was channelled toward the education sector (LaRocque, 2008), whilst other studies on the Philippines (Lorenzo-Molo, 2009) and various countries throughout Latin America (Letts, 2005) place basic education as a top choice for private foundation assistance. A review of philanthropy in Brazil, China, India, and Russia found that education was among the top recipient sectors (Spero, 2014). Yet while some studies allude to the education-related activities of private foundations in Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico (Turitz & Winder, 2005), Sub-Saharan Africa (Rose, 2006), and various countries throughout Southeast

² This clause came into force in April 2014 (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2014).

Asia and the Pacific (DFID & Aga Khan Development Network, 2003; LaRocque, 2008; Watkins, 2011; Zhou, 2011), a significant amount of grey literature on the wider topic of philanthropy in education and development focuses on or makes frequent mention of the activities of Indian philanthropists and private foundations.

2.1.1 The Bharti Foundation and the SBS Program: A brief profile

The Bharti Foundation has been recognized in the Indian and international media (M. Goyal & Jayakshankar, 2010a; Karunakaran, 2011; The Hindu, 2011) and development agency reports (LaRocque, 2008; World Bank, 2011) as one of the most influential philanthropic actors in education in India, alongside the Azim Premji and Shiv Nadar Foundations. According to its own assessment, the Bharti Foundation's SBS program is "one of the largest end-to-end rural education initiatives in the country" (BF, 2015b, website). The Foundation is the "philanthropic arm" of Bharti Enterprises, a conglomerate of major Indian companies that includes the country's largest mobile phone service provider, Bharti Airtel (BF, 2015a). Established in 2000 by Bharti Enterprises CEO and founder, Sunil Bharti Mittal, its stated vision is to "help the underprivileged children and young people of our country [India] realize their potential" (BF, 2014e) through various education-related grants and programs.

Mittal is often described in popular media as a "new economy" entrepreneur (Nilekani, 2011; The Economic Times, 2006), having fostered his fortune in India's ICT sector boom of the 1990s and 2000s, rather from other industries traditionally associated with wealthy, family-run business houses (e.g., manufacturing). Over the past decade, Bharti Airtel has partnered with other major companies throughout India and internationally, including Walmart India and Reliance Insurance, to form the business conglomerate, the Bharti Group. Having purchased several shares in African telecom markets, Bharti Airtel was recently reported as being the third largest telecommunications operator globally by subscribers, and the ninth largest by revenue (Times of India, 2014). Due to Bharti Airtel's success, Sunil Mittal has been termed the "leading icon in [India's] telecom growth story" (Sundar, 2013, p. 256).

The Bharti Group has pursued philanthropic activities in some shape or form since the 1990s, primarily through grant-making. However, in 2000, the Bharti Foundation was established with an initial endowment of Rs. 22 million from the Bharti Group's founders and promoters (Forbes Asia Magazine, 2009). Targeting education from its inception, the Foundation started by

funding the establishment of various business institutes and programs at the Indian Institutes of Technology in New Delhi and Mumbai.³ However over the past decade, the Foundation shifted from primarily grant-making to operating its own program in basic education. Described as the Foundation's "flagship program" (BF, 2015a), the SBS program was launched in 2006 with the stated objective to "improve accessibility and quality of education at school levels across rural India" (BF, 2011b, p.6). The program is currently active in six states (i.e., Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal), and covers pre-primary to senior secondary education. Alongside the SBS program, the Foundation has continued to provide grants to select recipients, including to certain schools, NGOs working in education and institutes of higher education.⁴ However the Foundation provides little information on these grants in its publications, and stresses that the SBS program is the core of its work (BF, 2012a).

2.1.2 The SBS Program: Models of implementation

The SBS program was implemented through four models. Tables 1 and 2 below provide key data on SBS schools and models that were running during the field research for this study in 2012. This study focuses on the SBS Greenfield and Adopted Schools models. They accounted for the largest number of schools during the time of the study (and still do). All other models were in earlier phases of development during field research.

³ IITs are autonomous, public engineering and management institutes in India that award graduate and undergraduate degrees and undertake research activities. The prestigious institutes are governed by the *Institutes of Technology Act, 1961* which has declared them as "institutions of national importance".

⁴ According to Bharti Foundation publications, at the time of field research in fall 2012, it was supporting nine projects through grants. These included: Akshay Patra (an NGO focused on providing mid-day meals); Kalakar Trust (an NGO that runs a school for artists' children in Delhi's slums); the Bharti Scholarship Scheme (a scheme which provides higher education scholarships to students from disadvantaged backgrounds); the Bharti School of Telecommunication Technology and Management at IIT, Delhi; DAV Police Public School (a school for children of police officers); Vidya Bharti Shaikshinik Mandal (a chain of business and arts colleges in Maharashtra state); and Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (an NGO that runs programs for people with disabilities). They were also ostensibly providing teacher training to the DLF Foundation (the philanthropic arm of India's leading real estate company) (BF, 2012a).

| SBS Model | Year Launched | Number of Schools |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Greenfield Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private, unaided, fee-free primary, upper-primary and elementary schools • Financed and managed by Bharti Foundation | 2006 | 197 |
| Adopted Government Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government primary, upper-primary and elementary schools • Receive certain grants from government (e.g., mid-day meal scheme, textbooks) • Remaining costs financed by Bharti Foundation • Managed by Bharti Foundation | 2007 | 49 |
| Schools run in partnership with NGOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private unaided fee-free primary schools • Considered SBS “Greenfield” schools • All costs shared with NGO • Bharti Foundation provides all teaching materials and technical support (e.g., curriculum, teacher training) | 2007 | 2 |
| Public-Private Partnership Mode Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government senior secondary schools • All costs shared with government • Bharti Foundation provides technical support (e.g., curriculum, teacher training) | 2010 | 5 |

Table 1: SBS models implemented prior to and during field research (fall 2012)

Source: (BF, 2012a)

Note: Shaded cells indicate models investigated as part of this study.

| | |
|---|--------|
| Primary schools (Class 1 to 5) | 186 |
| Upper-primary or elementary schools (Class 1 to 6 or 1 to 8, respectively)* | 62 |
| Senior secondary schools (Class 1 to 12) | 5 |
| Total SBS schools | 253 |
| Total enrolment | 38,300 |
| % Female enrolment | 48 |
| % enrolment from SC/ST/OBC communities | 76 |
| Total teachers | 1292 |

Table 2: SBS program statistics (as of fall 2012)

Source: (BF, 2012a)

Note*: In Rajasthan, upper-primary schooling consists of classes 6-8. The SBS program classifies schools with classes 1-6 as upper-primary schools, although technically they are primary schools with one upper-primary class.

In the SBS program’s most prominent model, the Greenfield Schools model, the Foundation bears the financial, operational and managerial responsibilities for 197 of its own rural fee-free private unaided primary, upper-primary and elementary schools in Punjab (90 schools), Haryana (46 schools), Rajasthan (29 schools), Uttar Pradesh (13 schools), Tamil Nadu (10 schools) and West Bengal (9 schools). In the SBS Adopted Government Schools model, its second-largest model, the Foundation entered into a partnership agreement with the Rajasthan

state government to undertake the operational, managerial, and partial financial responsibilities of 49 rural government primary schools. In a third, and much smaller model, the Foundation has partnered with a local NGO in Uttar Pradesh, the Pardada Pardadi Educational Society, to manage and finance two SBS fee-free private unaided primary schools. Sixty-two of these total 248 SBS primary schools had been or were being upgraded to the elementary level by the Foundation at the time of field research (BF, 2012a), through a phased approach in which they were first upgraded to the upper-primary level. In a fourth, and more recent model, the SBS Secondary Schools model, the managerial, operational and financial responsibilities of five secondary schools are shared between the Foundation and the state of Punjab under a “PPP mode” (BF, 2015a).

Two SBS-related programs were added after the field research for this study (see Table 3 below).

| SBS-related programs implemented after field research | Number of schools |
|--|---------------------------|
| Satya Bharti School Quality Support Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented in government primary schools Bharti Foundation provides technical support (e.g. curriculum, teacher training) for quality improvement | 7 (as of March 2015) |
| Satya Bharti Learning Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remedial learning centres in government schools for out-of-school children Financed in partnership with government and Education Above All Foundation | 229 (as of March 2015) |

Table 3: SBS models implemented after field research

Source: (BF, 2015c, website)

In late 2012, the Bharti Foundation spearheaded the Satya Bharti Quality Support Program, in which it provides technical support to governments in the areas of remedial teaching and learning. As of early 2015, the program was being implemented in seven rural primary government schools in Rajasthan (two schools), Haryana (four schools) and Punjab (one school) (BF, 2015c). Also, in partnership with Qatar’s Education above All Foundation, the Bharti Foundation is managing over 229 remedial learning centers called, Satya Bharti Learning Centres, in government schools throughout Rajasthan.⁵ These are designed to cater to small

⁵ Education above All is a private foundation founded in 2012 by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar. Its aim is to “build a global movement that contributes to human, social and economic development through the provision of quality education” (Education above All, 2015, website).

groups of out-of-school children with the aim of mainstreaming them into the government school system. Centres provide six to 12-week learning modules for children delivered by “education volunteers” (BF, 2015a).

2.2 Elementary education in India: Key developments and challenges

Philanthropic activities in education such as the SBS program have increased alongside important education initiatives and policy developments in India. Chiefly among these education initiatives is *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) (“Education for All” in Hindi), the Government of India’s official program for universal elementary education. Operational since 2000, SSA’s key foci in the first phase were to open new schools in habitations in need, strengthen school infrastructure and provide adequate training and academic support to teachers. SSA expenditure has been shared between central and state authorities, however the majority share of SSA funds have come from the centre (Government of India, 2013). SSA also includes a major component on early childhood care and education including expanding access to pre-primary education.

Most significantly, the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (RTE), which came into force in 2010, makes free education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14, and outlines the consequential responsibilities for central, state, and local government authorities, as well as private actors. The Act institutes a legal compulsion to achieve universal elementary education across the country. Responsibilities outlined in the Act include ensuring adequate infrastructure, completion rates, teachers and teaching practices, among many others (Government of India, 2009). Since the passing of the RTE, the second phase of SSA is focused on fulfilling the aims and provisions as outlined in the Act.

Of particular salience, the RTE mandates that private schools reserve 25% of their seats for children from disadvantaged groups (including scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBCs)), to be reimbursed by the state (Government of India, 2009). The Act also reaffirms that private unaided schools, i.e., independent schools that do not receive support from the government, require recognition to operate legally (Government of India, 2009). To achieve recognition, private schools are required to comply with a series of norms and standards set by the state, which can range from a required number of classrooms, to teacher salaries. While the Act outlines core regulations for providing free education, it also requires each state to develop a contextually-adapted set of RTE rules for implementation.

Despite these new policy commitments to education, the amount of public resources devoted to education in India stagnated between 2000 to 2012 at a mean of approximately 3.4% of GDP (Srivastava, 2014). This is much lower than the 6% recommended by UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* to reach quality education for all children by 2015 (UNESCO, 2014), and lower than India's own target of 6% of GDP by 1985 (Srivastava, 2014). Officially, India has achieved near universal enrolment in elementary education, with an enrolment rate of 96% across the country. However, it is still home to over one million out-of-school children (UNESCO, 2014), the majority of whom are girls, children in rural areas, and children from historically disadvantaged social caste and class groups, i.e., SCs, STs, and OBCs (UNICEF, 2014).

Despite increased access, the quality of education in India remains a significant challenge, particularly for India's marginalized groups. The widely cited *Annual Status of Education Reports* (ASER), a national survey of 585 rural Indian districts, have found that only 47% of Class 5 students could read a Class 2 standard text (ASER, 2013), and 8.6% of Class 3 students were unable to recognize numbers (ASER, 2013).⁶ In the most recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), India ranked second lowest out of 44 participating countries on tests assessing mathematics, science and reading (OECD, 2012).⁷

Government primary, upper-primary or elementary schools, will often be run by local government bodies (see Section 2.2.1 below for more on local government responsibilities), though some may be run by the state government or other government bodies (Srivastava, Noronha, & Fennell, 2013). While the majority of students in India access government schools, there is nonetheless a shift in some of India's rural and urban areas towards enrolment in private schools (Kingdon, 2007; Singh & Bangay, 2014). As seen in Table 4 below, an estimated 27.8 percent of all children in elementary school were being privately educated in 2013-14 (DISE, 2014), according to the District Information System for Education (DISE), India's central education management information system,

⁶ In India, elementary education is 8 years. In most states, this is followed by secondary (two years), higher secondary (two years), and tertiary. Depending on the state, the eight years of elementary education can be broken down into primary (usually, Class 1 to Class 5), and lower secondary/upper primary (usually, Class 6 to 8). In Rajasthan, primary schooling runs from Class 1 to 5, upper primary schooling imparts additional classes up to Class 7, and elementary schooling includes the complete course from Class 1 to 8 (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, pt. 1.2).

⁷ PISA was not a country-wide exercise in India. It only ran in the state of Tamil-Nadu (OECD, 2012).

Private elementary schools take different forms in India, depending on the source of school management and funding. All forms will not be reviewed here, as certain forms are more relevant to this study. ‘Private aided’ schools, which have been termed “public-private hybrids” (Srivastava et al., 2013, p. 4), are privately managed, but primarily financed by state governments, with up to 95% of their budgets covered through state government grant-in-aid (Srivastava et al., 2013). Purely private schools are termed ‘private unaided’ (PUA) schools. These schools are entirely privately managed and funded, and can be further broken down into two categories:

- **PUA recognized schools** have obtained recognition from the appropriate state authority.
- **PUA unrecognized schools** have not applied for, or have not successfully obtained, recognition from the state in compliance with minimum regulatory requirements (S. Goyal & Pandey, 2009). As a result of the RTE Act, these schools are no longer tenable in principle (Government of India, 2009, sec. 18(1)), though exist in practice, often by finding informal ways of continuing operations (Ohara, 2013; Srivastava, 2008).

| Enrolment by school type | |
|---|-------------|
| Total elementary enrolment | 198,899,659 |
| % Enrolment in government schools* | 61.32 |
| % Enrolment in private aided schools | 8.02 |
| % Enrolment in PUA recognized schools | 25.4 |
| % Enrolment in PUA unrecognized schools** | 2.40 |

Table 4: % Children in different types of schools in India 2014

Source: (DISE, 2014)

Notes: *DISE defines government schools as schools run by state departments of education, state tribal & social welfare departments, local governance bodies, the Central Government, and other government bodies (DISE, 2014)

**DISE data depend on self-reporting on the part of schools. Given the compulsions of the RTE Act, in particular those which render unrecognized schools no longer tenable in principle (Government of India, 2009, sec. 18(n)), it is likely these numbers underestimate the true enrolment in unrecognized schools.

Despite the traditional association of private schooling with the elite, research shows that some of this more recent growth in private education in India has been fuelled by some among the poorer/working classes (Singh & Bangay, 2014; Srivastava et al., 2013; Srivastava, 2008, 2013; Tooley & Dixon, 2005; Tooley, 2005). This trend is linked to the phenomenon of “low-fee private (LFP) schooling”, a term first coined by Srivastava (2005), who analyzed the growing number of independent, recognized and unrecognized private unaided schools in Uttar Pradesh, India. Srivastava (2007) operationalizes this term as schools which “[see] themselves targeting disadvantaged groups, [are] entirely self-financing through tuition fees, and charg[e] a monthly

tuition fee not exceeding about one day's earnings of a daily wage labourer at the primary and junior (elementary) levels..." (Srivastava, 2007, p. 4).

Despite this more recent trend, there also are a number of religious, private aided, and perhaps a lesser number of private unaided schools charging no or very minimal fees run by charitable trusts and non-governmental organizations, that have been in existence for a longer time. For example, Day Ashley (2006) examined the phenomenon of non-profit "private outreach initiatives" (p. 485) in Andhra Pradesh and Kolkata, India. She found that private schools managed by religious organizations were running free education programs for disadvantaged children, with the aim of mainstreaming them into government schools. Additionally, fee-free private unaided schools run by local NGOs are less noted in the more recent literature. Examples of such schools often cover operating costs through foreign support or domestic private philanthropy. For example, a local NGO in Uttar Pradesh, *Nai Disha*, has funded a fee-free private unaided school for 500 children from disadvantaged backgrounds since 1992 with the help of the domestic Smile Foundation (Nai Disha, 2015). *Bodh Shiksha Samiti*, an NGO in Rajasthan, has run seven free, private unaided schools in Jaipur with funding from UNICEF, Oxfam and Care India since the late 1980s (Bodh Shiksha Samiti, 2015). The practice of setting up fee-free unaided private schools is more recently being noted regarding some corporate philanthropists and foundations (Mital, 2009; Sidel, 2008), as explored in this study.

The involvement of NSPs in education, including more traditional actors such as NGOs as above, or new/non-traditional actors including think tanks, research institutes, and for-profit education companies, has been encouraged by central and state-level policy approaches over the past decade through public-private partnerships (PPPs). The Indian government's three most recent national development plans (Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth) propose PPPs to address quality and access issues in education (Srivastava et al., 2013; Srivastava, 2010b).⁸ Most notably, a proposal for PPP models was formally outlined in India's Eleventh Five Year plan which called for 2500 "model" senior secondary schools run through PPPs across the country (Ministry of

⁸ Since independence in 1947, the Indian government has taken a planning approach to economic development. India is currently in its Twelfth Five Year plan (2012-2017). However, the Planning Commission was dismantled in 2014 by the new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It has been replaced by the NITI Aayog, or National Institute for Transforming India. Therefore, the national planning structure is likely to change.

Human Resource Development, 2008, sec. 1.2.18).⁹ Srivastava (2010b) labels this new focus on PPPs in education and the involvement of corporate NSPs in particular, as emblematic of a “dramatic ‘paradigm shift’ (M. Sengupta, 2008) [in education] associated with India’s macro-economic liberalisation policy” of the 1990s (p. 541).

2.2.1 Elementary education in Rajasthan: Key developments and challenges

As education administration is highly decentralized in India, its structure has differed markedly from state to state. Additionally, each state has varying levels of quality provision. Rajasthan faces unique challenges, with many poor, remote rural and tribal areas. The state is two-thirds desert, with 10% of India’s landmass and only 5% of its population (Government of Rajasthan, 2005). Out of Rajasthan’s over 119,000 schools serving more than 12 million children, 84% are in rural areas (DISE, 2013a). Additionally, according to DISE, the proportion of elementary-age students in private schools is significant, and over 10% higher than the all-India average, as seen in Table 5 below (DISE, 2014).

| Enrolment by school type | |
|--|---------------|
| Total elementary enrolment | 12,290,252 |
| % Enrolment in government schools* | 52.16 |
| % Enrolment in private aided schools | Unavailable** |
| % Enrolment in PUA recognized schools | 44.79 |
| % Enrolment in PUA unrecognized schools*** | 1.52 |

Table 5: % Children in different types of schools in Rajasthan 2014

Source: (DISE, 2014)

Notes: *DISE defines government schools as schools run by state departments of education, state tribal & social welfare departments, local governance bodies, the Central Government, and other government bodies (DISE, 2014)
 **According to DISE data, the private aided model is no longer implemented in Rajasthan. 2012-13 DISE data reports only 38 private aided schools across the state (DISE, 2012)

***DISE data depend on self-reporting on the part of schools. Given the compulsions of the RTE Act, in particular those which render unrecognized schools no longer tenable in principle (Government of India, 2009, sec. 18(n)), it is likely these numbers underestimate the true enrolment in unrecognized schools.

While Rajasthan has made significant gains in elementary education over the past decades, it still lags behind the majority of Indian states on many education indicators. As Table 6 demonstrates, Rajasthan’s net primary enrollment and upper primary enrollment levels are still well under those of most states.

⁹ This PPP model school scheme has been suspended by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under Prime Minister Modi’s government. States, rather than the Central government, will be wholly responsible for funding any further action under the scheme (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2015b).

| Indicator | Rajasthan (%) | India Average (%) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Net primary enrollment | 79.5 | 88.1 |
| Net upper primary enrollment | 62.0 | 70.2 |
| School access to electricity | 48.2 | 51.7 |
| School approachable by road | 76.5 | 89.1 |
| Schools with access to drinking water | 94.8 | 95.5 |
| Computer in school | 22.5 | 23.3 |
| Single-teacher school | 11.8 | 8.3 |

Table 6: Select DISE indicators for Rajasthan (2013-14)

Source: (DISE, 2013a)

Recent studies reveal that children from SC or ST groups, particularly those belonging to remote tribal communities, account for a large portion of out-of-school children at the elementary level (UNICEF India, 2014). UNICEF India (2014), for example, found that rural children from ST groups accounted for approximately 24% of out-of-school children in Rajasthan aged 6 to 10, and 62.8% of out-of school children aged 11-13. Rural children from ST groups accounted for 16.2% and 23.7% of these groups, respectively. When controlled for gender, girls accounted for 3-15% more of these figures than their male counterparts (UNICEF India, 2014).

The state also faces unique infrastructure problems due to its vast geography. As seen in the table above, fewer than half of schools did not have access to electricity, one third of schools were not approachable by road, and thousands of schools did not have reliable access to drinking water around the time of field research for this study (DISE, 2013a). Additionally, incentivizing and retaining trained teachers to travel or live in remote areas is difficult, resulting in a high number (14%) of schools with only one teacher responsible for all teaching and administration (DISE, 2013a).

Schools in Rajasthan also face significant quality challenges. An in-depth survey of rural government schools in the state found that teacher absenteeism was a persistent factor leading to low learning attainment, with over 25% of teachers found absent at the time of the study (De, Khera, Samson & Shiva Kumar, 2011). Additionally, when teachers were present in 276 schools surveyed, almost half were not engaging in any teaching activity (De et al., 2011). These phenomena are said to be linked to poor incentives, supervision, training and support for teachers, exacerbated in particularly remote areas, where it is hard to incentivize well-qualified teachers to travel, and further, to support them (De et al., 2011; Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009). For example, the aforementioned study found that personnel at state government support centers

at the regional (block) and local (cluster) levels in Rajasthan lacked training and experience in pedagogical monitoring and support (De et al., 2011, p. 36).

In India, states have considerable authority to spearhead and fund their own programs to address their unique education challenges (Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009). The policy and funding for education in India comes from three levels of government: central, state and local. The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the central authority in New Delhi tasked with setting central policies and stimulating innovation and planning frameworks, such as the education-related aspects of India's Five Year plans. For central acts and initiatives, states have the authority to develop their own tailored rules and regulations within the centrally specified frameworks. For example, in response to the RTE, states have had the authority to develop their own RTE rules, including those on private school recognition (as long as they adhere to the compulsions of the central Act). In Rajasthan, all private schools have been required to obtain recognition under the Rajasthan Non-Government Educational Institutions Act since 1989 (amended in 1993, and again in 2010 with the introduction of the RTE).

In an additional layer of governance, there are democratically elected bodies at the local level called the *panchayati raj*, with three levels: village (*panchayat*), block (*panchayat samiti* for a specified number of villages) and district (*zila parishad*). Under India's Constitution, these bodies have various responsibilities related to education, including ensuring the provision of primary and elementary education in the individual villages under their jurisdiction, promoting enrolment of all children, and facilitating aspects of the construction and maintenance of schools. These responsibilities are elaborated and reinforced through the SSA and RTE (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2010).

State-level policy in Rajasthan is set by the Department of Elementary Education (formerly the Department of School Education), headquartered in Jaipur. Since the 1990s, the Department has implemented a number of multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at improving the reach and quality of education throughout the state. This has led some scholars to call Rajasthan a "laboratory of educational innovation" (Clarke & Jha, 2006, p. 226). Prominently among these was the *Lok Jumbish* project, or the "people's movement for education for all", which set up an autonomous state body between 1992-1998 to encourage women, girls and children and parents from SC and ST groups to participate in education (Ramachandran, 2003). Similarly, the state's

Shiksha Karmi project, implemented in partnership with the Swedish International Development Agency and a number of local and international organizations, involved the recruitment and training of local teachers and community volunteerism in education (Kothari, Chand, Sharma, Kalro, & Gupta, 2000). The state also partnered with the World Bank to improve infrastructure and teacher training in rural areas under India's District Primary Education Program (DPEP) of the 1990s (Kothari et al., 2000).

2.2.2 Policy context of the SBS program in Rajasthan

The SBS Greenfield and Adopted Schools models are affected by different regulatory frameworks in Rajasthan, the key difference being that the former are private unaided schools, while the latter are government schools. This section briefly overviews the history of the Foundation's engagement in Rajasthan and key policy developments that have implicated the SBS program in the state.

When the Foundation commenced its SBS program in Rajasthan in 2007, it was a relatively new education actor in the state, but had some previous smaller-scale engagement. Its first engagement in Rajasthan was through 'Bharti Computer Centres', set up in partnership with NGOs such as Pratham in 2004 (BF, 2006).¹⁰ The centres were built in private aided and private unaided elementary and secondary schools, each providing 8-10 computers and an instructor. Twenty-six were constructed across the country, with the majority in Punjab, and three in Rajasthan (BF, 2006, p. 24). During this period, the Bharti Foundation also supported the establishment of 104 school and community-based libraries across India, including four libraries in private schools in Rajasthan (BF, 2006).

However in 2006, the focus of the Foundation's engagement in Rajasthan shifted to primary education (BF, 2007).¹¹ Early Foundation publications on the SBS program outline the "plan to set up 1000 SBS primary schools to deliver quality education to the poorest children in the farthest villages of India" under its SBS Greenfield model (BF, 2007, p. 2). Rajasthan was the second state in which the Foundation launched its SBS Greenfield model, following closely after Punjab in 2006. By 2007, the Foundation had set up seven SBS Greenfield schools across the state (BF, 2007, p. 18). According to DISE data for 2012, these schools fell into the category of

¹⁰ Pratham is one of the largest NGOs in India focused on education. It supports a number of education interventions in 21 Indian states through direct program implementation and providing education expertise (Pratham, 2015).

¹¹ The Foundation now lists its computer centres and libraries as "past projects" (BF, 2013, p. 54).

private unaided institutions (DISE, 2013b). Thus, a key set of institutional constraints implicating the establishment of Greenfield schools were state policies governing private school recognition. The Foundation's mediation of these regulations is discussed in Chapter 7.

Later during the same year, the Foundation also started adopting schools under the purview of a recently established state initiative for PPPs in education, the Rajasthan Education Initiative (REI). The REI was launched in 2005 by the state in partnership with key global and domestic private players, including the Confederation of Indian Industry, an association of major Indian businesses which focuses on industry-related policy advocacy; the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, a global UN-affiliated organisation providing ICT-related assistance to developing-country education sectors; and the World Economic Forum. According to the original REI vision document, the initiative was meant to end in 2010 (Global e-schools and Communities Initiative & Rajasthan Department of School Education, 2005), however was still underway at the time of field research in 2012. In fact, according to recent Bharti Foundation annual reports, the initiative was still running in 2015 (BF, 2015c). The initiative was loosely based on and supported by the World Economic Forum's Global Education Initiative, which had also previously supported the Jordan Education Initiative in 2003, the latter which has been the focus of some critical research (Bhanji, 2008).

The basic premise of these education initiatives is to promote partnerships between state and non-state actors (including local and international NGOs, foundations, companies, consultancies, and other new/non-traditional actors) to support and strengthen public education systems (Government of Rajasthan, 2008). Specifically in the case of the REI, the core objective is to “demonstrate robust, sustainable and scalable models, approaches, tools and methodologies that can significantly impact educational outcomes and transform the educational scenario of the State” (Government of Rajasthan, 2005, p. 4). The REI vision document identified two desired areas for PPPs: “using technological interventions for effective delivery of educational instructions” (Government of Rajasthan, 2005, p. 6), and “creating an enabling environment in which effective learning can take place, including care and concern for disadvantaged students” (p. 6). It has some overlapping goals with the state's initiatives under SSA, e.g., widening access; enhancing learning and teaching outcomes; and improving infrastructure and management systems (Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, 2010).

Under the auspices of the REI, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was struck between the Government of Rajasthan and the Bharti Foundation in 2007, stipulating that the Foundation would adopt 50 government primary (class 1 to 5) or upper-primary schools (class 6 to 8) in rural areas determined with government approval. Under this MOU, the Foundation assumes the managerial responsibilities and operational costs of the schools, except for a small number of state schemes (i.e., free textbooks, notebooks and mid-day meals) for a duration of 10 years (2007-2017) (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b).

The field research for this study was conducted in a complex regulatory environment for the Foundation, as Rajasthan had just finalized their RTE rules the year before (2011). Rajasthan's RTE rules reiterate the necessity for private schools to obtain recognition (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 14). These rules also brought new requirements to government schools in relation to minimum teacher salaries, classrooms, and other school features. Importantly, the MOU for adopted schools was not modified to take these new regulations into account (Field notes on internal documents, 2012a).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This literature review is structured in three main parts. The first situates the Bharti Foundation and the SBS program in the literature on private actors in education. The second explores key debates in the literature on philanthropy in education, with a particular focus on developing countries and India. The review concludes with an overview of the theoretical literature that informed the conceptual framework of the study, focusing on a discussion on philanthropic actors as institutional entrepreneurs.

3.1 Situating the Bharti Foundation in the literature

A handful of academic studies have been conducted on the Bharti Foundation and the SBS program (Kainth, 2012; Mital, 2009; Pachauri, 2012). One descriptive case study examines the SBS program as an example of corporate philanthropy in India (Kainth, 2012), while another descriptive case study analyzes the program as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative (Mital, 2009). The third examines a particular SBS program model (the SBS Adopted Schools model) in Rajasthan as part of a multi-stakeholder PPP program in education (Pachauri, 2012). These diverse approaches to examining the program indicate the importance of clarifying the precise nature of the SBS program and the conceptual approach taken vis-à-vis the program in this study before situating it amongst relevant literature.

3.1.1 The Bharti Foundation as a corporate foundation

This review found that research on private foundations in education and development tends to conflate philanthropic actors with other types of NSPs (e.g., think tanks, research institutes, for-profit education companies), making arguments concerning the specific contributions and consequences of philanthropic actors difficult to extract amongst more general arguments about NSPs in education (Srivastava & Oh, 2010). Grey literature often includes private foundations as one of several types of private actors that yield the same benefits for education systems, described as collectively bringing heightened managerial and strategic skills to education projects (Aga Khan Foundation, 2007a; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Ball (2012a) for example, analyzes “private and philanthropic solutions to the problem of education” (p. 53) as one phenomenon. Draxler (2008) appeals to scholars that a distinction must be made

between non-profit and for-profit actors in education, as they have different institutional structures, intentions and relationships with government and other non-governmental organizations. Srivastava & Oh (2010) add that this conflation allows more controversial forms of privatization (e.g., for-profit engagement) to be glossed over by “more socially palatable non-profit” (p. 462) approaches (e.g., philanthropy) in policy discussions.

There is also little differentiation among different types of philanthropic actors in the literature. Some of the key features of different philanthropic actors described are detailed in the typology in Table 7 below, with examples. For example, scholars often conflate primarily grant-making foundations (which administer grants for programming) and primarily operating foundations (which implement their own programming) as a unit in their analyses (Ball, 2012a; Capek & Mead, 2006; Mital, 2009), even though they have key differences in institutional structures and delivery mechanisms (Anheier & Toepler, 1999). This differentiation is especially important when analyzing philanthropy in developing countries, where the available research indicates that foundations prefer to operate their own programs (Letts, 2005; Sundar, 2000; Watkins, 2011).

Lorenzo-Molo (2009) and Porter and Kramer (2002) additionally highlight the importance of distinguishing between philanthropy as emerging directly from corporations, and philanthropy as carried out by established corporate foundations. While the former is usually planned and executed by company employees, often with direct guidance or intervention from the company’s senior officials, corporate foundations can have their own staff, mandate, resources, and separate premises from their parent company (Porter & Kramer, 2002).

Some attribute this conflation to a general reluctance amongst scholars and institutions to target private foundations specifically in critical analyses due to a reliance on private foundation funds for research or programming (Koirala-Azad, 2009). However, others assert that this conflation could be due to the diverse legal requirements for and definitions of private foundations across different contexts (Marten & Witte, 2008; Steinfeldt et al., 2012). Karl and Katz (1987) argue that early 20th century American and European industrialists produced a “novel legal and institutional structure for philanthropy – the private foundation” (p. 3). Nearly two decades later, Fleishman (2009) refers to private foundations as “the great American secret” (xiv). Srivastava and Oh (2010) however, point out that similar forms of organized philanthropy are certainly not exclusive to the West, with organizations such as the Ratan Tata Trust

| Individual/family philanthropy | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Type of philanthropic actor</i> | <i>Features of engagement in education</i> | <i>Example of engagement</i> |
| Individual(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals/families direct their own resources (monetary or in-kind) to initiatives in education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2001, individuals and families have ‘adopted’ primary and secondary schools in South Africa through contributing personal funds toward their building and operational costs (facilitated by the Adopt-A-School Foundation, South Africa) (Adopt-a-School Foundation, 2015) |
| Individual/family foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals/families direct their own resources to found and support a separate legal entity (foundation) to conduct activities • Foundation is directed by a board of trustees and/or CEO • Foundations have their own staff but activities are often guided by founders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S.-based William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, founded on an endowment from the American Hewlett family, provides grants to NGOs in developing countries through its Quality Education in Developing Countries programme (William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2015) |
| Corporate philanthropy | | |
| <i>Type of philanthropic actor</i> | <i>Features of engagement in education</i> | <i>Example of engagement</i> |
| Corporation(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporations and/or their employees direct their resources (monetary or in-kind) to initiatives in education • Company employees plan or direct their engagement, often with direct guidance or intervention from a company’s senior officials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shell has made investments to improve basic schooling in Nigeria through funding infrastructure and equipment (science supplies and textbooks), teacher training, and adult literacy programs in over 2600 Nigerian secondary schools (Bhanji, 2008). |
| Corporate foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporations direct their resources to found and support a separate legal entity (foundation) to conduct activities • Foundation is directed by a separate board of trustees and/or CEO • Foundation may have its own staff, mandate, and premises separate from the parent corporation • The extent of leadership/direction from the parent corporation varies (e.g. the board of trustees may be composed of senior parent corporation representatives) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The India-based Bharti Foundation, supported by an endowment from Bharti Group, has established and operates a chain of over 250 free primary, elementary and secondary schools in rural India, both independently and in partnership with the government (BF, 2015b). |

Table 7: Sources of philanthropic engagement

Source: Reproduced from Srivastava, Read, & Baur, 2015

arising in India in the same early 20th century period (see Section 2.1).

However, in India, there is no legal definition for the terms, “foundation” or “private foundation”. Rather, as a report by India’s Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008)

notes, Indian self-titled “foundations” are most often entities that have registered under state or central legislation to obtain the legal title as either a “trust”, a “society” or a “non-profit company” (p. 77). The Bharti Foundation (BF, 2015a), for example, is registered under a “deed to trust” (website, no p. number).

Marten and Witte (2008) draw on key characteristics of private foundations across a number of Western countries to develop general criteria for private foundations, conceptualizing them as: (1) non-for-profit entities; (2) financed by their own resources; (3) governed by a CEO or an independent board of trustees; (4) outside of the public sector, and; (5) focused on issues concerning the “common good” (p. 5). The Bharti Foundation, governed by its own CEO and funded primarily through an endowment from the Bharti Group of Companies (BF, 2013), fits this definition. According to the typology in Table 7 below, the Bharti Foundation, with its flagship SBS Program, would best fit the category of a corporate (rather than individual), primarily operating (rather than primarily grant-making) private foundation.

3.1.2 Distinguishing the SBS program from ‘corporate social responsibility’

A few of the Foundation’s publications refer to the Foundation as “the corporate social responsibility arm” of the Bharti Group of Companies (BF, 2008b, p. 2). Additionally, the scant existing scholarly studies of the SBS program label the Bharti Foundation as “the CSR branch of a telecom company” (Pachauri, 2012, p. 133), and the SBS program as an example of “generic CSR” (Mital, 2009, p. 33) in the Indian context. What constitutes CSR is hotly debated and contextually defined (Hollerer, Jancsary, Meyer, & Vettori, 2013). It is outside the scope of the thesis to outline the key debates here. However, it is important to highlight that while corporate philanthropy and CSR may share many characteristics, they also have distinct features. Mitra (2007) provides a general definition of CSR as “preventative, curative or promotive action to deal with social issues in the course of business functioning” (p. 2). While both corporate philanthropy and CSR are often associated with promoting the greater good, CSR is often enforced by formal rules (e.g., legislation) or informal norms (e.g., societal expectations) and enacted upon by

companies; whereas, corporate philanthropy is generally seen to be voluntary and is often enacted through subsidiaries (e.g. NGOs, foundations) (Leisinger, 2010). Indeed, each company in the Bharti Group has its own CSR agenda, separate from the Bharti Foundation's activities (BF, 2015, website). This conceptualization was echoed by some Foundation staff during this study: "we're [the Foundation] not, corporate CSR as they say.... [the SBS program] is very clearly philanthropic" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

This study thus takes the position that the Foundation and its SBS program should be classified as philanthropy stemming from a corporate foundation, rather than CSR *per se*. Therefore, the wider literature on CSR is not engaged with substantively in this study. However, it is important to note that the SBS program is reportedly a key recipient of the Bharti Group of Companies' CSR spending under the Indian *Companies Act, 2013* (Live Mint Online, 2015), which came into force after the field research for this study.

3.1.3 The SBS program as a 'public-private partnership'

The Bharti Foundation describes the SBS Program as "one of the largest public-private partnerships in the country" (BF, 2009a). However, a World Bank (2011) study also argues that the SBS program generally "fits poorly into India's wider PPP framework" (p. 18), as philanthropic actors are not incentivized with "economic return drivers and access to private capital" (p. 18), like private actors would be in PPPs in traditional sectors like infrastructure. It labels the SBS program a "private-sector philanthropic partnership" (World Bank, 2011, p. 18) to make this difference clear.

However, in the Indian context, PPPs are conceptualized much more broadly. A 2004 Working Group constituted by the Planning Commission of India defines a PPP in social sectors as:

...a mode of implementing government programmes/schemes in partnership with the private sector...encompass[ing] all non-government agencies such as the corporate sector, voluntary organizations, self-help groups, partnership firms, individuals and community based organizations. PPP, moreover, subsumes all the objectives of the service being provided earlier by the government, and is not intended to compromise on them. *Essentially, the shift in emphasis is from delivering services directly, to service management and coordination* (Planning Commission, 2004, p. 4, emphasis added).

This definition seemingly applies well to one model of the SBS program (the Adopted Schools model; see Section 2.1.2 for more on SBS models), in which the state government has shifted on-the-ground school management to the Bharti Foundation, and claims to maintain a coordination and oversight role (Interview with State Education Official, 2012a). In their review of private sector involvement in SSA in India (2000-2010), Srivastava, Noronha and Fennel (2013) indeed note that “major PPP initiatives in primary education are carried out by a range of partners” (p. 32). These partners include more “traditional” (p. 32) NGOs (e.g. Oxfam, Care India) as well as “newer actors, such as corporations that establish partnerships as part of their CSR initiatives, and a growing and increasingly diverse philanthropic sector” (p. 33), including actors such as the Bharti and Azim Premji foundations.

This broad range of actors means that state-philanthropic partnerships may be conflated with a number of other actors in analyses on PPPs in education (Gibson & Davies, 2008; Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio, & Guaqueta, 2009), without consideration of their specific characteristics or implications. This lack of focused analysis on state-philanthropic partnerships reaffirms the relevance of some of the central questions proposed by this study, intending to clarify the nature of the Foundation’s engagement and the institutional framework of the SBS program.

3.2 ‘New’ philanthropy in education: Key debates

Anheier and Toepler (1999) warn that the “lack of a significant body of knowledge about foundations outside the United States has led to a lopsided view of foundations internationally... American concepts and interpretation have become the yardstick to measure and evaluate foundations elsewhere” (p. 6). Indeed, peer-reviewed research on philanthropy and private foundations in education in developing countries is scant. This review found much more literature in the form of theses, dissertations, commissioned reports, and evaluations. However, academic literature has expanded relatively in recent years, as scholars take note of the increasing prominence of philanthropy in education in developing countries. Several key discussions on the topic can be teased out, focusing on key contested claims supporting “new” philanthropic engagement, and the phenomenon of “philanthropic governance” (Ball & Olmedo, 2011; Srivastava & Baur, forthcoming) in education globally. Heeding Anheier and Toepler’s (1999) warning, this literature review primarily focuses on philanthropic engagement that implicates

developing countries to provide a useful basis for analysis, while selectively taking into account wider debates from Western/Northern contexts where relevant.

This review finds that four key claims can be discerned in the recent literature supporting private philanthropic engagement in education. These claims posit that private philanthropy brings much-needed resources, expertise in management and economic relevance, and an ability to innovate to education, all contested by a growing body of critical scholarship (Ball, 2008; Hess, 2005a; Hewa & Stapleton, 2005; Saltman, 2010; Sidel, 2008; Turitz & Winder, 2005). Woven throughout this discussion is a discernable focus on what scholars are terming a “new” form of philanthropy that is arising globally, with specific consequences for basic education sectors in developing countries (Ball, 2008, 2010, 2012a; Bhanji, 2012, 2014; Nambissan & Ball, 2010; Olmedo, 2013; Srivastava & Baur, forthcoming; Verger, 2012). The key points on either side of these debates are overviewed in the sections below.

3.2.1 The ‘scarce resources’ claim

International actors often unsurprisingly claim that the flow of additional resources from private philanthropy may ease budget constraints in the education sectors of developing countries (Aga Khan Foundation, 2007a; World Bank, 2009). This argument has been identified by Srivastava (2014) as a core “logic of intervention” underpinning policy discourses that support the increasing entry of “‘new/non-traditional’ actors (e.g., corporates, think tanks, venture philanthropy, private foundations, corporate foundations, consulting firms, etc.)” into the education sector in India (para. 23). Verger (2012) similarly highlights national budgetary constraints as a key argument that international organizations (e.g., the CfTB Education Trust, the International Finance Corporation) use to legitimize their promotion of PPPs in education (“ePPPs”) throughout the global South, including PPPs with philanthropic actors.

Critics of this claim insist that it ignores the stagnating education budgets or underfunding of education targets by national governments and international donors (Kraus, 2010; Srivastava & Oh, 2010). Srivastava (2014) points out that the scarce resources argument is particularly “difficult to justify [in] India” (para. 8), as government spending on education has stayed stagnant at approximately 3.38% of GDP between 2000-2012 (see Section 2.2). Srivastava (2010a) argues that this claim is strategically employed to coalesce support for contested neoliberal approaches which champion greater private sector participation and

shrinking state involvement in education. Lock's (2011) research on corporate foundation school sponsorship in Ecuador, for example, found that some foundation leaders felt they were expected to "assume the role of the state" (p. 443) due to a persistently unquestioned and low prioritization of education on the national agenda.

3.2.2 The 'economic relevance' claim

Many view certain philanthropic interventions as useful in rendering education systems more relevant for the economy, pointing to philanthropic actors' often substantive knowledge of labour market needs (Blake, Chand, Dutta, Fradd, & Gupta, 2009; Das, 2009; van Fleet, 2011b; Winthrop, Bulloch, Bhatt, & Wood, 2013). Some argue that this is particularly true of foundations affiliated with ICT corporations, which often run programs or provide technologies in primary and secondary schools that impart computer skills to students (Akukwe, 2014; Global Business Coalition for Education, 2014). Cassel (2010), for example, traces how a network of prominent domestic philanthropists successfully spearheaded a computer literacy program in schools across Liberia, concluding it was one of the "quickest and most cost-effective ways to raise Liberians' readiness for work" (Cassell, 2010, p. 69). Such arguments are particularly salient for India in the wake of its rise as a knowledge economy, seeing the proliferation of domestic ICT-related industries and new philanthropic actors arising from it (see Section 2.1).

Watkins (2011), however, argues that such motivations can lead to education-related investments that reflect a company's own needs and skills deficits without taking into consideration national education priorities. For example, an in-depth study (Love, 2008) of a series of primary schools managed by corporate foundations in Nigeria argues that the curricula of these schools underwent "wholesale cultural substitution" (p. 73), emphasizing quantitative attainment in math and literacy and rejecting earlier content intended to perpetuate shared cultural norms and social cohesion. Some are further concerned that such approaches emphasize a primarily human capital approach to understanding education quality (Hess, 2005a; Saltman, 2010; Sidel, 2008), in which "the central rationale for investing in education (including more recently education quality) lies in the contribution that education can make to economic growth" (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 4). Olmedo (2013) goes as far as to label new forms of global philanthropy as "the new imperialism" (p. 592) where "discourses around education and development have the effect of rendering populations economically useful and politically docile

in relation to dominant global interests” (p. 592). Ball and Youdell (2007) raise further concerns that interventions which champion a company’s products (e.g., computers, software) could be privileging profits over education processes and outcomes.

However, recent literature demonstrates that seeking return or profit from philanthropic engagement is becoming a more acceptable and even encouraged approach. Scholars describe newer forms of philanthropy as more “strategic” or “win-win” (Craig & Kane, 2001), with proponents encouraging both international businesses and domestic foundations in developing countries to conceptualize basic education as a profitable business investment for their parent or affiliated industries (Cappelli, Singh, Singh, & Useem, 2010; Porter & Kramer, 2011). They assert that companies or individuals can and should connect their support of education with their short and long-term core business interests, which can include good community and government relations, a more competent future workforce, and the creation of new markets for their products (Bronfman & Soloman, 2010; Mital, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2002).

Most often mentioned in the literature is the use of philanthropy in education as a vehicle to foster desirable market conditions and a wider consumer base in developing societies, reflecting Porter and Kramer’s (2002) assertion that “more educated consumers will demand more sophisticated products” (p. 14). A survey of domestic ICT companies in the Niger Delta, for example, found that they concentrated 30% of their philanthropic activities in the primary education sector, with the stated aim of creating a demand for computers and other in-class technologies from teachers and schools (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012, p. 57). Ball and Youdell (2007) similarly note the tendency of corporate foundations worldwide to either covertly or overtly attach advertising for their affiliated products to their philanthropy in education through, for example, the free provision of such technology for classrooms.

Beyond promoting their own products, corporations or corporate foundations can also attach emotional value to their brand by supporting causes that their parent company’s target market can relate to, generating media attention and creating trust with communities or potential consumers (Lorenzo-Molo, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Education is often cited as a low-risk and obvious target area for corporate philanthropic engagement due to its ‘multiplier effect’ in increasing a community’s knowledge of personal rights and state responsibilities, and therefore local demands for health, sanitation, water, and economic opportunities (Amadi & Abdullah, 2012; Blake et al., 2009; Das, 2009; J. Davies, 2007). Grant-makers in Ecuador, Brazil and

Mexico describe education as an attractive choice due to its high level of public acceptance and thus the ready availability of international and government funds to expand their projects (Turitz & Winder, 2005).

Along this vein, some studies note that education-related philanthropy is an excellent strategy for industries to build a more beneficial relationship with governments in developing countries (Draxler, 2008; Hewa & Stapleton, 2005; Sidel, 2008) and therefore bring “public interest in line with private economic interests” (Hewa & Stapleton, 2005, p. 5). Sidel (2008), for example, labels primary education “the basic currency of the political economy of the new Indian philanthropy” (p.6) due to its ability to “thicken” (p. 6) the relationship between the parent company/industry and the state, which is at once their “regulator, customer, partner and grantee” (p. 6). He posits that the education-related philanthropy of actors such as the Azim Premji Foundation (founded by the CEO of Indian technology giant Wipro) has warmed up some state governments to more liberal legal and trade frameworks for the ICT industry. Indeed, the Confederation of Indian Industry champions corporate philanthropy in education as a “business strategy that works” (Das, 2009, p. 4). Zhou’s (2011) study of domestic corporate foundations in rural China goes as far as to argue that investments in compulsory education can be a “form of bribery” (p. 194) to governments, especially when they entail direct monetary transfers to the state.

Furthermore, critics (Ball & Youdell, 2007; Love, 2008; van Fleet, 2011b) raise concerns that such “strategic” motivations can wed philanthropy to only those regions deemed profitable, thus allowing private foundations to overlook communities most in need of education-related support. They note that this has occurred with international education-related philanthropy in emerging markets (Steer & Wathne, 2010; van Fleet, 2011b; Watkins, 2011), describing a “tight fit” with the international investments of the foundations’ parent companies and their philanthropy in education. Some have argued that this approach could leave other South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries or particular communities with the poorest levels of enrolment and student attainment without similar philanthropic support (van Fleet, 2011b). Critics also assert that philanthropic activities can mask the need for such companies to be integrating ethical practices directly into their business strategies (Lorenzo-Molo, 2009).

3.2.3 The ‘managerial expertise’ claim

The most prevalent contested claim arising in the literature posits philanthropic actors, including private foundations, as inherently better managers of education provision than state governments or NGOs (Aga Khan Foundation, 2007a; Craig & Kane, 2001; World Bank, 2009). Proponents argue that, due to their affiliation with prominent and successful corporations and industries, private philanthropic actors have superior managerial expertise in cost-efficiency, product development, tangible results, and efficient delivery of quality goods and services (Ingram, Carrol, Wils, & Townsend, 2006; Mital, 2009; van Fleet, 2011b). For example, writing on corporate philanthropy in the Indian context, Sundar (2013) asserts that “business is uniquely placed to make a difference...offer[ing] not only money resources but organization and management skills, vision, [and] leadership” (p. 196).

Many scholars note a stronger emphasis “newer” philanthropists in particular place on their managerial expertise as a guide for their work (Edwards, 2009a; Ramdas, 2011; Rogers, 2011). They argue that as business classes grow in both advanced and emerging economies, often due to the “new economy” industries (e.g., ICTs), groups of younger, less-experienced donors have applied the same expertise that led to their business success to their philanthropic engagement (Inderfurth, Khambatta, Lombardo, & Stokes, 2012; Johnson, 2003; Sidel et al., 2008). Bishop and Green (2008) label this new style “philanthrocapitalism” (p. 5), or the application of capitalist business practices, including market-oriented approaches, to philanthropic endeavours. Desai and Kharas (2008) argue that this “philanthrocapitalism”, also variously termed “venture philanthropy” or “social entrepreneurship” (p. 159), has become a mantra particularly adopted by foundations arising from the Silicon Valley dot-com boom in the United States, terming this the “California Consensus” (p. 159). This “consensus” sees software billionaires such as Bill Gates holding “abiding faith in the capacity of innovation, technology and modern management methods to solve the problems of extreme poverty” (Desai & Kharas, 2008, p. 158).

While most contributors to this discussion are careful to argue that philanthrocapitalism is not a “mantra adopted by all foundations” (Marten & Witte, 2008, p. 10), the literature has, in recent years, incorporated mention of Southern, particularly Indian, foundations. For example, the 2012 *India Philanthropy Report* attributes the country’s recent increase in philanthropic giving to “wealthy young Indians seeking to replicate Western approaches to charity here in

India” (Bain & Company, 2012, p. 6). In his study of private philanthropy in Hyderabad and Bangalore, Sidel (2008) similarly concludes that “as in the U.S...a new generation of high-technology corporate leaders, their families and their companies are.. explor[ing] new paths in social innovation through philanthropy just as they have pioneered new forms of corporate development” (p. 1). Furthermore, it seems that some of these newer Southern actors are also increasingly applying market logic to their interventions, seen, for example, in the competitive financial incentive programs philanthropists have supported in public school systems in countries like India (Barnhardt, Karlan, & Khemani, 2009), Pakistan (Patrinos et al., 2009), and Ecuador (Lock, 2011).

This “managerial expertise” claim is underpinned by rationales of inefficient bureaucracies, state failure to deliver quality education, and poorly managed civil society organizations that misunderstand ‘business culture’ (van Fleet, 2011b). In contrast, new philanthropists are portrayed as “hyperagents” (Olmedo, 2013, p. 583), able to do certain things much better than other organizations. For example, a recent report, *Revealing Indian Philanthropy* discusses the shortcomings of Indian NGOs at length, referencing “issues of trust and transparency” and a “lack of a performance-oriented culture in most NGOs” (UBS Foundation, 2013, p. 58). Conversely, the authors describe a “new crop of corporate foundations” (UBS Foundation, 2013, p. 59) in India as “driven by the desire to institutionalize proven corporate tools and techniques to deliver results on the ground” (UBS Foundation, 2013, p. 59), and argue that governments have “realized the effectiveness of these entities in comparison to traditional NGOs” (UBS Foundation, 2013, p. 59).

Such claims have been linked to the reported increase of private foundations throughout the global South which choose to operate their own education programs due to a belief that this will be more efficient or effective (Mital, 2009; Sidel, 2008; Turitz & Winder, 2005). This is contrasted with the approach of traditional philanthropic organizations which largely relied on governments, civil society organizations and other intermediaries to design and implement their programs (Ball, 2012a; Nambissan & Ball, 2010; Olmedo, 2013). Indeed, Sidel (2008) found that many leaders of “new” Indian foundations had avoided intermediaries due to beliefs about poor economic efficiency, and suboptimal management and financial skills of Indian NGO managers and personnel.

However, despite the seeming anti-intermediary bias of new philanthropists (Sidel, 2008), the literature simultaneously notes that Southern private foundations and governments are increasingly opting to partner with one another in education (Ball, 2012b; Inderfurth et al., 2012; Patrinos et al., 2009; Sidel, 2008). Indeed, the managerial expertise claim has been particularly instrumental in supporting PPP arrangements internationally, captured in the global neoliberal policy paradigm of the “new managerialism”, or the “insertion of the theories and techniques of business management and the ‘cult of excellence’ into public sector institutions...stress[ing] constant attention to ‘quality’” (Ball, 1998). In his analysis of international policy for PPPs in education, Verger (2012) elaborates that these discourses have flourished in the current “so-called Post-Washington Consensus” which “encourages the state to explore non-bureaucratic ways of coordinating economic and social activities” (p. 120), and thus allow private sector actors “a more dynamic role in economic and societal development” (Verger, 2012, p. 120). This “dynamic role” involves the “state modifying its organizational culture by learning from the private sector at the managerial level” (Verger, 2012, p. 120), including “tak[ing] advantage of their participation in partnership frameworks to learn from the...qualities and values of the private sector...including flexibility, openness to societal demands [and] incentives for innovation and efficiency” (p. 120). In India in particular, many have noted PPP approaches to education have become much more popular in national policies since India’s New Economic Policy of 1991, which ushered in a series of neoliberal policies promoting state withdrawal from industry and market liberalization (K. Kumar, 2005; Nambissan & Ball, 2010; Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009; Srivastava, 2010b).

Mirroring wider debates on private involvement in education, this neoliberal logic is highly contested by much of the literature in this review due to quality, equity and accountability concerns (Ball, 2012; Ball & Youdell, 2007; Edwards, 2011; Johnson, 2003; Steer & Wathne, 2008; Watkins, 2011). Some argue that these PPPs can simply be forms of schooling privatization and marketization under a different name (Kumar, 2012; Srivastava & Oh, 2010) with the term “partnership” used to neutralize contestation against for-profit approaches to expanding education access and state withdrawal (Ball, 2012a). Others highlight the dearth of concrete evidence comparing the perceived managerial efficiency of private foundation projects to those of other NGOs and governments, reflecting a gap in the wider literature (Desai & Kharas, 2008; Verger, 2012). A study of Indian private foundations, for example, reveals that

most evaluations of their education projects are either funded or carried out by private foundations themselves (Blake et al., 2009). In addition, this claim assumes that private foundations share the same strategic business expertise as their parent industries or affiliated companies, while foundations are often separately staffed and managed, with differing levels of input from their founders or benefactors (Porter & Kramer, 2002).

However, beyond the lack of concrete evidence to support the managerial efficiency claim, scholars are more concerned that the stronger emphasis new philanthropists place on their own managerial acumen renders the new philanthropy increasingly “top-down” (Edwards, 2011b; Olmedo, 2013; Ramdas, 2011; Rogers, 2011). Critics fear that this increasingly top-down approach results in the exclusion of important stakeholders from the design and implementation of education initiatives (Ball, 2012a; Hess, 2005a; Saltman, 2010; Watkins, 2011), though examples are largely limited to the West. For example, in his analysis of the “new philanthropy” in the British education system, Ball (2008) notes the “top-down” and “impatient” nature of these newer philanthropic actors has resulted in “exclusionary networks” (p. 761) between state actors and philanthropists which bypass traditional civil society groups and foster new “narrative[s] of what counts as “good education” (p. 761). Saltman (2010) demonstrates how such “new narratives” are also forming in American public school systems (p. 141), in which a growing body of wealthy philanthropists have influenced the state to adopt “behaviourist, outcomes-oriented pedagogy and technical curricula” (Saltman, 2010, p. 141) which focus on quantifiable education outcomes at the expense of more holistic and critical pedagogy. For Ramdas (2011), such approaches ignore “human, social, cultural and traditional complexities and realities” (p. 393) in exchange for “technological solutions and problem-oriented results” (Ramdas, 2011, p. 396).

Along this vein, scholars often describe “new philanthropy” as more results-oriented and metrics-based, with philanthropists placing a stronger emphasis on the direct relation of their philanthropic giving to measurable impacts and outcomes (Ball, 2012a; Edwards, 2009b; Ramdas, 2011; Rogers, 2011). This has been seemingly coupled with an increased effort on behalf of private foundations to determine one comprehensive fix or “silver-bullet” solution to complex education problems (Brooks, Leach, Lucas, & Millstone, 2009). The increasingly popular private foundation practice throughout India and Pakistan of creating “model” schools,

meant to offer a scalable and replicable example of quality education (Central Square Foundation, 2014), exemplifies this mode of thinking (Juneja, 2010).

Some note that technicist solutions lend themselves particularly poorly to education systems, which are highly complex and influenced by a variety of internal and external dynamics and relationships. Changes are often gradual and exhibit more qualitative (e.g., better teacher-student relationships) rather than quantitative (e.g., higher student achievement levels) results (Edwards, 2011a; Hess, 2005b). Some are further concerned that this top-down approach amounts to “private authority” (Bhanji, 2009, p. ii) by “creating, developing and expanding new forms of governmentality” (Olmedo, 2013, p. 580) in education. This phenomenon has been termed “philanthropic governance” (Bhanji, 2008; Olmedo, 2013; Stone, 2010), or “philanthropic policymaking” (Ramdas, 2011). For example, Olmedo (2013) uses the term “philanthropic governance”, to describe how a network of international companies, NGOs and philanthropic organizations “engag[ed] in the re-definition of subjectivities ([e.g.,] what is to be understood as being a teacher and being a student)” (p. 586) in India and Uganda by inserting “new forms of management [and] business practices [through] the creation of [PPPs]” (Olmedo, 2013, p. 586). He describes this as “private governments”... “operat[ing] across the boundaries of public and private [with] little accountability to [their] many stakeholder[s]” (Olmedo, 2013, p. 587).

3.2.4 The ‘innovation’ claim

Conversely, some proponents of new philanthropy frame this lack of accountability as a unique comparative advantage, allowing philanthropic actors to be more “innovative”, as they are not beholden to citizens in elections like governments are, and do not have to spend time or energy fundraising, like civil society organizations do (Bishop & Green, 2008; Brainard & Chollet, 2008). Indeed, Edwards (2011a) points out that private foundations naturally suffer a democratic “accountability deficit” as they are either family-based or governed by their own private boards of directors, thus, retaining ultimate control over their policies and spending. Due to this autonomy, philanthropic actors are often conceptualized as offering or supporting new and innovative solutions to education challenges that should be scaled-up to wider education systems, including methods of delivery (Lewis & Patrinos, 2011), teaching-learning approaches (van Fleet, 2011a), and running ‘model’ schools (Aga Khan Foundation, 2007). Some argue that such innovative approaches are particularly beneficial for education systems (Aga Khan Foundation,

2007a; ECOSOC, 2012) that tend to be “anti-change” (Aga Khan Foundation, 2007a, p. 20), bureaucratic in nature and lacking the resources for experimentation and macro-level reform.

Echoing the managerial expertise claim, philanthropists are further conceptualized as potentially more innovative than other actors through their ostensible ability, through their connection to their parent companies, to combine tools, resources and approaches from business and social fields. Proponents of this claim point to a range of innovative examples, from philanthropists’ application of managerial business expertise or technology to schooling as described in the previous sections, to a more overt use of income-generating approaches in what are often termed innovative financing models (Burnett & Bermingham, 2010; Winthrop et al., 2013; Zhou, 2011). For example, self-described as an example of “social enterprise”, “social innovation” and “impact-investing”(LGT Venture Philanthropy, 2016b, website, no p. number), the Swiss organization LGT Venture Philanthropy converts philanthropic donations into equity investments and loans to support organizations in developing countries that have “developed innovative and replicable models designed to [improve] the quality of life of disadvantaged people” (LGT Venture Philanthropy, 2016a, website, no p. number). Among other organizations, it supports Educate Girls, an Indian NGO which works to improve the quality of basic education for girls in Rajasthan, India (LGT Venture Philanthropy, 2015).

However, Srivastava and Oh (2010) note that, as with the managerial expertise claim above, there is a dearth of concrete, non-partisan and large-scale evidence measuring the success of these innovative” approaches in comparison with other government and NGO approaches. More vehement critics such as Smillie (2009) argue that in development practice, “innovation” is a widely used “buzzword” can be more synonymous with “temporary” or “unsustainable” than success (p. 88).

Furthermore, critics point to a problematic price for philanthropists’ innovative capabilities, arguing that philanthropists’ “natural” accountability deficit can be exacerbated when only a small group of elites govern the largest, most influential foundations within a country (Branelly & Ndaruhutse, 2008; Edwards, 2011a; Hess, 2005a; Olmedo, 2013). Lorenzo-Molo (2009) provides evidence that this may be the case in the Philippines, where the largest education-focused foundations are governed by a small industrial elite with a high level of ownership in their affiliated companies. Some further argue that this “deficit” may be particularly acute in philanthropy in education, as contributions of foundations often represent a large amount

of the money available to support reform, thus acting as a “small rudder steering a large ship” (Hess, 2005b, p. 132). van Fleet (2011c) notes that the amount of money available for structural or ambitious changes in primary and secondary national education systems is often especially small in developing countries, some of which have not yet reached universal primary education access with their current budgets.

Crucially, this lack of accountability is seemingly exacerbated by the slow response of developing country governments to establish appropriate legal frameworks that regulate and monitor the growing education-related activities of private foundations within their borders, including those carried out with their “partnership” (van Fleet, 2012). This lack of regulation is characterized by van Fleet (2012) as the state “giving away at least part of its sovereignty over the provision of education as well as its accountability to the public” (p. 70), and is described as a dangerous “policy vacuum” in Latin American (Letts, 2005), South Asian (Sidel, 2008) and Sub-Saharan African (Bhanji, 2009) contexts by others.

3.3 Theoretical lens: Private foundations and institutional change

As discussed above, scholars argue that philanthropic actors are increasingly operating as agents of social and political change in education, and seem to be exerting new levels of influence in the field. In recent years, scholars have begun to view the influence of philanthropic actors through a lens of institutional theory (Acs & Desai, 2007; Bartley, 2007; Brulle, 2013; Jenkins, 1998; Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, & Meyerson, 2014; Thümler, 2011). Institutional theory, in contrast to theories which fail to account for the impact of actors’ environments on their decisions and behaviours (e.g. neoclassical economics), holds that individual behaviour, action and organization are constrained, enabled and shaped by “institutions” rather than purely rational calculations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). “Institutions” in this sense are defined as “rules, norms, and beliefs that describe reality for [an] organization, explaining what is and is not, what can be acted upon and what cannot” (Hoffman, 1999, p. 351). These institutions “specify and justify social arrangements and behaviors, both formal and informal” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 73), and to diverge from these institutions is “costly in some manner” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145). Scott (2001) further specifies institutions into a typology containing three categories: “regulative” (e.g., rules, laws and sanctions), “normative” (e.g.,

societal obligation, certification, accreditation), and “cultural-cognitive” (e.g., taken for granted, common beliefs) (p. 52).

Through this institutional lens, private foundations are viewed as organizational actors, engaged in the pursuit of institutional change within an “organizational field” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148) or “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). Bourdieu (1990) further defines organizational fields as “networks of social relations, structured systems of social positions within which struggles take place over resources, stakes and access” (cited in Maguire et al., 2004, p. 658). Meyer and Rowan (2006), for instance, argue that education as an organizational field is “contingent and contested...a school...can [take] a stupendous variety of feasible forms” (p. 4), and that the key purpose of institutional analysis in education is to “tell us why—out of this stupendous variety of feasible forms—this or that particular one is actually ‘selected’ and whose interests might be served by the selected arrangement” (Meyer & Rowan, 2006, p. 4).

Institutional theory can be largely divided into two theoretical approaches of “old” institutionalism and “new” institutionalism (Battilana et al., 2009). The former focuses on discerning and comparing formal institutional arrangements and administrative structures (Easton, 1971; Shepsle, 1989), while the latter, examined here, emphasizes the crucial role that social and political institutions play in individual and collective choice (North, 1990; Scott & Meyer, 1991, 1994). New institutionalism itself is actually not a unified body of thought, and contains many variants (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Some of these variants include economic institutionalism (North, 1990; Williamson, 1985), cognitive institutionalism (Mantzavinos, North, & Shariq, 2004; Weick, 1979) and sociological institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In the literature on private foundations as agents of institutional change, the sociological variant is most strongly employed. This variant (DiMaggio, 1988; Scott & Meyer, 1991) proposes that actors’ behaviours are driven by their need to be “regarded as legitimate in their institutional environment” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 73). Here, legitimacy is defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Thus, certain repertoires of actions within a particular institutional field come to be viewed as legitimate, rendering it costly for actors and organizations to deviate from this script of action (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

In its earlier forms, new institutional theory was thus employed principally to explain persistent organizational behaviour and organizational homogeneity, or “isomorphism”, in different organizational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Critics of new institutional theory thus found that it failed to account for institutional change (Hirsch & Lounsbury, 1997), and led to an “over-socialized view of action” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 73). In recent years, there has been heightened interest in how non-isomorphic change can be explained using an institutional lens, and the nature of the “institutional work” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 73) required to preserve and change institutions (Maguire et al., 2004; Quinn et al., 2014; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2014). Private foundations, because of their tendency to participate in socio-political change, have been the subject of many of these analyses, with a growing body of scholarship conceptualizing them as “institutional entrepreneurs” (Acs & Desai, 2007; Brulle, 2013; Quinn et al., 2014; Thümler, 2011), a term explored in the sections below.

3.3.1 Private foundations as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’

The term institutional entrepreneurship is most strongly associated with DiMaggio’s (1988) argument that “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly” (p. 14). This concept was introduced to explain how actors can spur institutional change despite their institutional framework’s pressures towards stasis, thus reintroducing actors’ agency, interests and power into the institutional analysis of organizations (Battilana et al., 2009). To qualify as an institutional entrepreneur, an actor must be characterized by a volition to “initiate divergent changes...that break the institutional status quo in a field of activity and thereby possibly contribute to transforming existing institutions or creating new ones” (Gardu, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007, p. 10). This concept resonates with the Schumpeterian definition of entrepreneurs as agents who create new business models, and in so doing introduce novel elements into their operating environments (Schumpeter, 1934). However, Battilana et al. (2009) are careful to point out that although actors could qualify as both entrepreneurs in this Schumpeterian sense, and institutional entrepreneurs, the latter must “break from the existing institutionalized template for organizing” (p. 68), a condition not essential for the former. When aiming to change “regulatory” institutions (Scott, 2001) in education, institutional entrepreneurs resonate with Verger’s (2012) notion of “policy entrepreneur[s]” (p. 3), actors which aim to “prompt practice communities to pay attention to

certain problems [and] to promote particular policy prescriptions” (p. 5) through their engagement in education.

A number of scholars have conceptualized private foundations as institutional entrepreneurs (Acs & Desai, 2007; Street, 2009; Thümler, 2011). Quinn et al. (2014), for example, posit that all private foundations are potential institutional entrepreneurs, arguing that the “possession of sufficient resources” (DiMaggio, 1988, p. 14) in DiMaggio’s definition of institutional entrepreneurship is well-suited to foundations. Schramm (2007) similarly argues that a core function of private foundations in the United States is to “play the role of an institutional entrepreneur, challenging other social institutions” (p. 360). Acs and Desai (2007) argue that this “core function” of foundations is achieved “because of the independence of foundation funding, which allows these organizations to innovate and challenge other kinds of social institutions” (p. 6), reflecting the contested claim explored in Section 2.3.3 above.

While the independence of foundation funding could indeed increase the likelihood that a foundation will seek to or successfully operate as an institutional entrepreneur, scholars argue that all private foundations are certainly not successful in spurring the complex process of institutional change (Quinn et al., 2014; Thümler, 2011). Of interest to the study of institutional entrepreneurship is both *why* specific actors are able to envision change that deviates from the institutions that define and constrain their behavior, and *how* these actors get others to adopt these changes (Battilana et al., 2009). Within institutional theory, this challenge is often referred to as “the paradox of embedded agency” (Gardu et al., 2007; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). While this debate is ongoing, theories on the process of institutional entrepreneurship offer some insight.

3.3.2 The process of institutional entrepreneurship

Scholars of institutional entrepreneurship argue that it is necessarily an “intensely political process” (Gardu et al., 2007, p. 10) as institutional entrepreneurs must embed their changes in fields made up of diverse organizations, many of whom are “invested in, committed to and advantaged by existing structural arrangements” (p. 10). A number of scholars have theorized actions and conditions that enhance the likelihood that institutional entrepreneurs will be successful in initiating change in organizational fields (Battilana, 2006; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Maguire et al., 2004; Quinn et al., 2014; Street, 2009). Through their literature review of over 150 studies on institutional entrepreneurship, Battilana et al. (2009) synthesize

much of this scholarship into a model (see Figure 1 below) which examines both enabling conditions and actions that these actors can take to enhance the likelihood of success. The key features, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, of this model are unpacked in the remainder of this chapter.

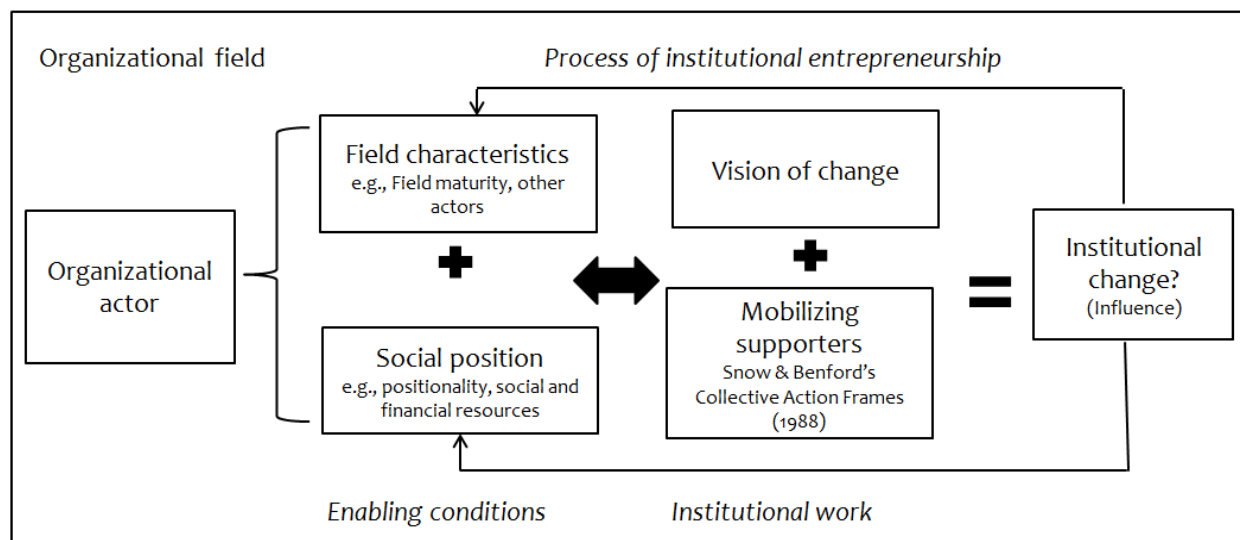


Figure 1: Model of the process of institutional entrepreneurship

Source: Adapted from (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 87)

3.3.2.a Harnessing enabling conditions

A number of scholars stress the importance of key enabling conditions that prompt actors and organizations to consider divergent change (Maguire et al., 2004; Strang & Sine, 2002). These enabling conditions include both the characteristics of actors, which Battilana (2006) terms “social position” (p. 654), and the characteristics of these actors’ institutional environments, termed “field conditions (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 74). Field conditions include “jolts and crises” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 74) in a field, which may entail “social upheaval, technological disruption, competitive discontinuity, and regulatory changes that can disturb the socially constructed, field-level consensus and invite the introduction of new ideas” (p. 74). Fligstein & Mara-Drita (1996), for example, demonstrated how economic crises were essential to the European Commission’s ability to operate as an institutional entrepreneur in the creation of the Single Market. Similarly, in their study of the global EFA movement, Mundy and Murphy (2001) argue that “the rise of new technologies” coupled with “the historical accumulation of

models and spaces for transnational collective action have combined to create a unique ‘opportunity’ for the development of new effective forms of transnational nongovernmental contestation” (p. 88). Others emphasize the “maturity” of a field is also important to institutional entrepreneurship. In their study of the rise of HIV/Aids advocacy organizations in Canada in the 1980s, Maguire et al. (2004) argue that a key reason institutional entrepreneurs were able to champion new forms of advocacy is that the field was “emerging”: it had “yet to develop certain institutional features [i.e.], leading actors, a coherent discourse, structures of cooperation and domination of accepted norms, [and] mature organizational relationships” (p. 672).

Despite conducive field conditions, scholars note that “only some actors will exploit the opportunity to become institutional entrepreneurs” (p. 75). Much attention has thus been paid in the literature to an actor’s “social position” (Battilana, 2006, p. 65). Drawing on Bordieu’s (1988) conceptualization of ‘fields’ and ‘habitus’, Battilana (2006) argues that an actor’s social position is crucial because it determines both an actor’s perception of the field and whether they have access to the resources necessary to initiate change. Maguire et al. (2004) for example, found that successful HIV/Aids advocacy organizations were organizations whose “positions provide legitimacy in the eyes of, and the ability to bridge, diverse stakeholders, which allows them to access dispersed sets of resources” (p. 658). These resources can include material resources, or symbolic resources, such as expertise or political access (Maguire et al., 2004). They therefore suggest that an actor’s position “across fields” (in this case, pharmaceutical companies and hospitals) might influence the likelihood that they will become an institutional entrepreneur (Maguire et al., 2004), calling this a “bridging position” (p. 644).

Of key relevance to this study, Quinn et al. (2014) argue that private foundations occupy a distinct social position due to their significant access to material resources, often considerable social capital, and ability to even confer legitimacy on other organizations themselves by favouring certain organizational forms through grant-making. They further argue that foundations are unique in their ability to both envision a change and possess adequate financial resources to implement it in practice, whereas other types of institutional entrepreneurs must work to convince others to contribute resources to their vision (Quinn et al., 2014). Private foundations also often bridge different fields in the sense that they are non-profit organizations, although maintain their connections to the profit-seeking, corporate world from which they generated their wealth (Quinn

et al., 2014).¹² They find, for example, that private foundations populated the new organizational form of charter school management organizations in California with a combination of educational and business professionals, leading to a more entrepreneurial form of management organization which valued “managerial acumen... effectiveness and scale” (p. 957). These organizations were thus able to adopt desirable features of private school chains while maintaining the “legitimacy of a non-profit” (p. 957), in a sector where profit-generation was viewed with suspicion (Quinn et al., 2014). Bhanji and Oxley (2013) similarly found that corporate philanthropic activities in education can come under suspicion in developing countries because many view the government and civil society as “the only legitimate sources of authority” (p. 292) in the sector, terming this the “liability of privateness” (p. 291). Thus, operating through an intermediary (e.g., a foundation) or using their social capital to facilitate PPPs or partnerships with NGOs can be strategies for corporations to confer public legitimacy for their philanthropic efforts (Bhanji & Oxley, 2013).

3.3.2.b Framing change

Rather than simply harness and possess certain enabling conditions, scholars argue that institutional entrepreneurs must also engage in “institutional work” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 215), or what Gardu et al. (2007) term “complex collective action” (p. 7) to embed their desired institutions into wider institutional frameworks. For example, they are sure to encounter political opposition from “institutional defenders” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 80) who benefit from the current institutional arrangement. To overcome these constraints, institutional entrepreneurs must cultivate allies to participate in and/or support their change projects (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000; Rao, 1998). Battilana et al. (2009) find that the literature on institutional entrepreneurship generally points to three “sets of activities” (p. 78) required for change implementation: “developing a vision, mobilizing people behind that vision, and motivating them to achieve and sustain it” (p. 78).

Battilana et al. (2009) argue that research on framing in the social movement literature is particularly useful in this regard, as successful social movement organizations must similarly frame a “change project”: “(1) in terms of the problem it helps to resolve; (2) as preferred to

¹² The term “non-profit” is highly contested, particularly in the context of a proliferation of social investment and profit types in recent decades. Here, the term is used in the traditional sense to mean that investors (private foundations) are not drawing any profit out of their initiatives as dividends.

existing arrangements; and (3) as motivated by compelling reasons” (p. 79). Indeed, many studies (Battilana et al., 2009; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Maguire et al., 2004) demonstrate how institutional entrepreneurs strategically employ discursive frames to identify existing “organizational shortfalls” and legitimize “new, divergent organizational forms to stakeholders” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 83) and “frame [their] preferred organizational forms as necessary, valid and appropriate” (Quinn et al., 2014, p. 952).

These activities roughly translate into Benford and Snow’s (1988) well-known three forms of “collective action” (p. 188) framing: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational (p. 188). Collective action frames “assign meaning and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, garner bystander support, and demobilize antagonists” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 188). These frames “help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). They also “act like cognitive locks that restrict decision-makers to certain intellectual paths, reduce uncertainty among policy-makers and constitute broad cognitive constraints on the range of solutions that they perceive and deem to be useful for solving problems” (Verger, 2012, p. 111).

Various authors have explored how collective action frames have been used by powerful actors to justify particular models of education provision (S. Davies, 2002; Heinecke, Dawson, & Willis, 2001; Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Srivastava, 2010b). Mundy and Murphy (2001), for example, have deconstructed the various “ways in which global educational problems and their solutions are talked about” (p. 91) to motivate and legitimate collective action for EFA among NGOs with divergent approaches to understanding education (i.e., rights-based or human capital approaches). Srivastava (2010) provides an analysis of the mobilizing frames used by actors to “coalesce action” (p. 523) around the privatization of schooling as a desirable method for reaching EFA targets. She argues that these frames, rooted in the contested claims discussed above related to scarce resources (see Section 3.2.1) and efficiency (see Section 3.2.3), are used by actors to legitimize private schooling “as the only logical solution to complex problems” (p. 524) in the field. In a similar analysis, Verger (2012) unpacks the collective action frames used by transnational policy communities to coalesce action around the “programmatic idea” (p. 111) of PPPs in education.

The first core framing task is “diagnostic” framing or what Snow and Benford (1988) describe as the process in which advocates of a particular movement “identif[y] a problem and attribute blame or causality” (p. 200). Verger (2012) shows how ePPP mobilizers, for example, point to issues of access, budgetary constraints, poor learning outcomes, and a lack of competition and incentives in the public education sector to legitimize the entry of private actors into the field. Menashay (2011) similarly demonstrates how World Bank discourses frame public schools as “dysfunctional” and “inherently problematic” (p. 133), thus championing the private provision of schooling as a superior alternative. This proposed solution is an example of “prognostic framing” which Snow and Benford (1988) describe as the identification of “solutions, tactics, targets and strategies to engage in ameliorative or corrective action” (p. 201) against the problem that has been identified, followed by “motivational framing” which defines “a call to arms or rationale for action” (p. 202).

Many scholars of institutional entrepreneurship hold that while institutions influence actor’s behaviour in “important and often unconscious ways” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 70), they are also “toolkits for actors” (p. 70). Indeed, in their investigations of why some organizational forms and processes gain legitimacy while others do not, many authors (Fligstein & Mara-Drita, 1996; Rao, 1998; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2014) found that institutional entrepreneurs “recombine cultural elements to frame preferred organizational forms as necessary, valid and appropriate” (Quinn et al., 2014, p. 952) in order to appeal to diverse groups. For example, Quinn et al. (2014) demonstrate how charter management organizations re-combine the “institutional logics” (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2014, p. 36) of business and education, conceptualizing their schools as competitors to traditional public schooling that will “catalyze change” (p. 36) in the latter. This frame is pervasive in privatization discourses globally, described by Srivastava as the “competition-choice-quality” (p. 526) frame.

According to Benford and Snow (2000), the potential success of these frames can be attributed to a phenomenon termed “frame resonance” (p. 619), described as “the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings, thereby attending to the question of why some framings seem to be effective or ‘resonate’ while others do not” (p. 619). They identify two variables to account for this success: the “credibility of the proffered frame” and its “relative salience” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). They describe the latter as the “centrality”, “range” and “interrelatedness” of a frame within the “internal structure of the larger belief system or

ideology within which the movement seems to seek to effect some form of alignment” (p. 205). Verger (2012), further defines this variable as a process whereby framings of “programmatically ideas” achieve greater mobilizing success “if they echo within the policy paradigm and the public sentiments that prevail in society at the time they are formulated” (p. 8). For example, due to the rise of neoliberal discourses as described by Ball (1998) in Section 3.2.3 above, Verger (2012) argues that PPPs have come to acquire “enormous centrality in the agendas of the most important multilateral, regional and bilateral aid agencies in education (e.g., the World Bank, UNESCO)” (p. 110).

The second component of frame resonance, frame “credibility”, is defined as “consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Srivastava (2010a) notes that this credibility is achieved by the “selective use of what is considered ‘evidence’” (p. 524) and “the bargaining power and cachet that particular actors have in the international policy arena” (p. 524). For example, she argues that proponents of LFP schooling in developing countries often strategically employ selective studies that demonstrate comparatively better learning outcomes in LFP schools when compared to public alternatives. Crucially, she shows that these findings often fail to hold when controlling for the socioeconomic status of the students in question (Srivastava, 2010a).

Throughout these framing activities, an actor’s social position and field conditions continue to remain important (Battilana et al., 2009). For example, an actor’s position amongst networks of actors will influence their ability to disseminate and diffuse their frames and ideas amongst their targets, through activities such as “negotiating, bargaining, promises, and compromise” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 671). Verger (2012), for example, finds that successful PPP ‘policy entrepreneurs’ are “located at the interstices of a range of influential social and policy networks” (p. 113) which allows them to “distribute policy briefs, position papers, reports and advisory memos [and] attend public and private events that are usually well attended by national political leads and policy-makers” (p. 113). As discussed in Section 2.1, private foundations are often part of such influential networks. Additionally, as the cyclical model in Figure 1 above demonstrates, if divergent change diffuses through a field, it could positively affect an actor’s social position, laying the ground for their further institutional entrepreneurship.

3.4 Conceptual framework

As the study evolved through data collection and investigation, I drew from the literature on institutional entrepreneurship above to build a conceptual framework for analysis. To understand the Bharti Foundation's influence in the field of education, I started by exploring the Foundation's objectives, vision for educational change, and desired role in that vision. Once the Foundation's objective of institutional entrepreneurship was established (See Section 5.1) the study applied Battilana et al.'s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship to more deeply investigate whether/how the Foundation influenced its regulatory environment.

Specifically, I examined how the Foundation used collective action frames in its discourses to build legitimacy and mobilize support for its vision of educational change. I then assessed the resonance of the Foundation's collective action frames by first exploring their salience in national and global discourses, and then how the Foundation constructed credibility for them. This necessitated a deeper understanding of how the Foundation conceptualized and operationalized the notion of quality in education (See Section 5.2). Moving forward, I investigated whether the logics underpinning these frames resonated at the programmatic and school levels. Finally, I examined how or whether the Foundation used these frames, as well as its position in, and characteristics of, its institutional environment, to institutionalize its vision of change in the field of elementary education in Rajasthan.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This MA study will build from and contribute to a larger project spearheaded by Prof. Prachi Srivastava, funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). One of the key objectives of the larger project is to examine the changing roles of NSPs and state actors in education, with India as a country of focus. One area of inquiry aims to critically analyze the changing landscape for NSPs, in particular the emergence of “new/non-traditional” NSPs, and their influence in basic education. This MA study investigates the phenomenon of engagement by ‘new’ philanthropic actors in India’s elementary education sector through a focused case study.

4.1 Research design, questions and objectives

The primary objective of this study is to critically investigate the nature of the engagement of new philanthropic actors and their influence in the provision of elementary education in India. To achieve this objective, this study uses a single case study approach, holding to Yin’s (2009) argument that the “more a question seeks to explain how some social phenomenon works, the more a case study will be relevant” (p. 26). Along this vein, Yin (2009) argues that a single (rather than cross-case or multiple) case study is an appropriate method if it seeks to “uncover some prevalent phenomenon previously inaccessible to social scientists” (p. 120), as it is justified “on the grounds of its revelatory nature” (Yin, 2009, p. 120). Due to a dearth of research on the topic as described in the literature review, this study takes as its case one such actor’s program (the Bharti Foundation, the SBS program) in elementary education in India, with the aim of shedding some light on the phenomenon, and generating potential areas of inquiry and approaches for future studies. In this sense, the study serves as an “instrumental” case study, in which the purpose of the study is to understand some wider phenomenon than the case itself (Stake, 1995, p. 3).

Drawing on key insights and gaps in the literature, this case study focused on the research questions below. These research questions were unpacked during data analysis through an iterative process using a series of analytic questions that emerged in the research (see Box 1).

1. What are the Foundation’s objectives in operating the SBS program?
 - a. What are the Foundation’s strategies for achieving these objectives?
 - b. How are they realized in practice?

2. What are the regulatory institutions (rules, policies and enforcement mechanisms) that enable or constrain the SBS program in Rajasthan?
3. How does the Bharti Foundation interact with/mediate this institutional framework?
 - a. Does the Foundation change it? How?

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). For the purposes of this study, the following criteria were used to select a program as a case through which to analyse the engagement of a specific “new” philanthropic actor:

- The program was established for at least five years at the time of field research in 2012 (increasing the likelihood that the institutional framework of the program was relatively established).
- The program was primarily funded or operated by either an individual or corporate private philanthropic foundation (see Section 3.1.1 in literature review for criteria).
- The program was primarily funded or operated by a foundation that was relatively “new” in the sense that it was established after India’s economic liberalization reforms of 1991 (i.e. India’s New Economic Policy), and had some link with knowledge economy industries.
- The program was described as influential at the regional or national levels due to its size, reach or impact as documented in available sources.

The SBS program meets these criteria. The program was established in 2006, and is operated by the Bharti Foundation, a corporate philanthropic foundation founded in 2000, affiliated with a major telecommunications company. Although there is a lack of systematic data on philanthropy in Indian education, the SBS program’s ostensible coverage of over 63,000 students across the country since commencing (BF, 2012a), made it relatively large amongst other potential programs at the time of field research. This was determined through a thorough literature review for this study, which included grey literature and secondary sources such as domestic and international news articles (e.g., see Ball & Olmedo, 2011; M. Goyal & Jayakshankar, 2010b; Karunakaran, 2011; LaRocque, 2008; The Hindu, 2011; World Bank, 2011). The selection was further confirmed through discussions and liaison with local key

informants from international agencies, local education experts, and the larger project's collaborating organisation in India, Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD). Concerns of access and field entry also affected the choice among other relevant programs that were considered. Access to the Bharti Foundation was eased by the larger project team. The Foundation also willingly agreed to host me for an in-depth study of its program.

As Indian states have a considerable amount of authority in setting education policy and regulations (see Section 2.2.1), the institutional frameworks for education in India can differ in some respects from state to state. It was not possible to investigate all six states participating in the SBS program (i.e., Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal). The SBS program in Rajasthan was thus chosen as an embedded sub-case to provide a more detailed illustration of the institutional framework of the program and the Foundation's mediation of and influence in this framework. Rather than a "holistic" (Yin, 2009, p. 121) case in which the "global nature of an organization or program" (Yin, 2009, p. 121) is primarily examined, an embedded sub-case occurs when "in a single case, attention is given to a subunit or subunits" in order for the researcher to "exa[mine] a specific phenomenon in operational detail" (Yin, 2009, p. 121). The SBS program in Rajasthan was selected as a sub-case as it offered the most potentially dynamic and holistic representation of the program. Rajasthan accounted for the second highest number of SBS schools (78 out of 245) next to Punjab (96 of 245). It was also the only state out of the six to employ the two largest SBS implementation models, i.e., the adoption of government schools and the construction and operation of new schools (Greenfield model). The state, therefore, could provide a useful illustration of different ways the Foundation has interacted with wider institutional framework for education.

4.2 Overview of research methods and field sites

This case study employed three key research methods for data collection: (1) documentary analysis, (2) focused, semi-structured interviews and (3) non-participant observation. Field sites were in the national capital region (Delhi and Gurgaon) and Rajasthan. Field research was conducted from September 2012 to December 2012. CORD served as the host organization. I spent the first two weeks of field research there (late September 2012), coordinating my access to the Foundation, accessing relevant literature or documents in CORD's extensive research library, and refining my research strategies with the help of CORD senior researchers. By October, the

Bharti Foundation agreed to meet me to discuss my objectives and research plan at its headquarters, housed within the national Bharti Airtel corporate office in Gurgaon. Following this successful meeting, the Foundation generously offered me a desk and a pass to the office building. I spent approximately 15 days at headquarters (9 am to 5 pm) between October and November, time used primarily to conduct interviews with Foundation staff, record and analyze relevant internal documents, and plan field visits to SBS offices and schools in Rajasthan.

In early December 2012, I visited two SBS district offices in Rajasthan to conduct interviews and non-participant observation. SBS district offices served as monitoring, support and oversight bodies for the SBS program at the state-level. These visits were accompanied by visits to six SBS schools for interviews and non-participant observation. Two were SBS adopted schools, and four were SBS Greenfield schools (see Section 2.1.2 for more detail on schools in this study). Five were primary schools (Classes 1-5), and one was an upper-primary school (Classes 1-6). Each school was visited once for a period of approximately three hours. Given the scope of this study and constraints, the number of schools was not meant to be representative of the SBS program in Rajasthan or elsewhere. School interviews and observations were meant to provide an illustration of how the SBS program may have been run in practice.

Foundation staff insisted that they schedule the visits to SBS district offices and schools. They provided two reasons for this: (1) they wanted to ensure schools were informed ahead of time so that school staff could plan for a visitor, and (2) to assist me as a new researcher in India (Field notes, 2012b). While I was certainly appreciative of the desire to help and ease my entry, there may also have been additional reasons. For example, Foundation staff may have wanted to ensure that SBS schools visited were of a “high quality”. Advance notice may also have helped to ensure that staff and classroom activities reflected well on the program. Such situations explain why unannounced visits are a popular alternative strategy in education research, as they enhance the likelihood that the researcher will collect data that more strongly typifies the day-to-day functioning of a school or program (e.g., Heymann & Cassola, 2012; Kremer, Chaudhury, Rogers, Muralidharan, & Hammer, 2005).

It may also have been most convenient to reach these locations. For example, the schools the Foundation chose were all located relatively close to large urban centers or major roadways. Visitor registers showed that several foreign researchers or prospective donors had visited within the past year at one school (Observation field notes, 2012d). In other schools, the Foundation’s

CEO and several other senior employees had also visited in previous years (Observation field notes, 2012b).¹³

In order to obtain a more varied picture of the SBS program in Rajasthan, I obtained permission from the Foundation staff to visit two additional schools (one visit each) that were further from main roads to conduct unannounced visits. It is not uncommon in the local context for schools to be approached this way, particularly if permission has been obtained by the managing authority, which was, in this case, the Bharti Foundation. While school staff was not informed of my visit prior to arrival, I began by introducing the study and myself to head teachers. Permission was sought from head teachers before any further engagement with the school, following the approved ethical protocols for this study. Head teachers at the unannounced visit schools confirmed that no researcher or senior member of the Bharti Foundation had ever visited (Observation field notes, 2012b). One school was a primary school (Classes 1-5), and one school was an upper-primary school (Classes 1-6). Both schools were SBS Greenfield schools. As per the ethical procedure approved for this study, the precise names and locations of all schools shall remain anonymous. During these visits, only the interpreter accompanied me. No Bharti Foundation staff members accompanied me, nor were they told of the exact schools where I conducted unannounced visits. I did not sign the visitor register and also bound my driver and interpreter not to reveal the identity of the schools through a verbal confidentiality agreement.

Upon returning to Canada in December 2012, further documentary analysis was performed on online documents, and a telephone interview was conducted with two government officials in Rajasthan involved in the governance of the SBS program. Further details on these methods and how they responded to the central questions posed by this study are provided below.

4.2.1 Data collection

4.2.1.a Written documents

Extensive documentary analysis was conducted to explore the Foundation's objectives in engaging in elementary education, as well as the external institutional framework of the SBS program in Rajasthan. Key publicly available documents collected for analysis included the Foundation's annual reports, program brochures, promotional presentations, press releases,

¹³ In line with the ethical parameters of this study, I did not sign these registers.

newsletters, and the Bharti Foundation website. To understand the external institutional framework of the SBS program, I also collected publicly available documents including India's Five-Year Plans during the periods of the Foundation's engagement covered for this study (2000-2012), Rajasthan's Five-Year Plans, the National Voluntary Guidelines for Corporate Social Responsibility, the RTE, Rajasthan's RTE Rules, and Rajasthan's Non-Government Educational Institutions Act (1989) and related rules (1993, 2010), among other policy documents. These documents were accessed online and collected before, during and after field research.

Key internal documents on the SBS program included SBS lesson plans, the Foundation's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rajasthan government, drafts of annual reports, drafts of promotional material and awards acceptance speeches, and the SBS Operating Manual and its related drafts (2003-2008), which cover "49 processes [of the SBS program] for primary and elementary schools...with regard to Operations, Human Resource, Training & Curriculum, Construction, IT & Support as well as Quality Management" (BF, 2013, p. 24, see Section 6.1 for more on this manual). Access to internal documents was controlled. The provision of any documents was first approved by the Foundation's senior management (Observation field notes, 2012c), and documents were provided upon request in hard copy or on a Bharti Foundation laptop during my time at headquarters. Certain documents, such as internal audits and two external audits of the SBS program completed in 2011-2012, were not made available.

I was permitted to transcribe relevant sections of these internal documents into my field notes on my computer, but not to take copies. I also used these field notes to pinpoint areas of further inquiry for future documentary analysis or interviews. In total, the data collection from internal documents produced 180 typed pages of field notes. All documents were available in English.

4.2.1.b Semi-structured interviews

A total of 17 focused, semi-structured interviews were conducted at four field sites: the Bharti Foundation national headquarters, two SBS Rajasthan district offices, six SBS program schools in Rajasthan, and the Rajasthan Department of Elementary Education (via telephone). With the verbal consent of each interviewee, I digitally recorded interviews, and later transcribed them. I also recorded field notes during and directly after the interview to highlight potential patterns or areas requiring further investigation in future interviews, documentary analysis or

observations. Interviews were conducted in the language of the interviewee's choice. Interviews with Bharti Foundation headquarters staff, field staff and Rajasthan government employees were conducted in English (10 total), while the six interviews conducted with SBS head teachers were conducted in a mix of Hindi and English with the assistance of an interpreter. All of the head teachers oscillated between the two languages, though interviews were conducted primarily in Hindi. At the advice of Foundation staff at headquarters, I hired two different interpreters (one for each district) for interviews in SBS district offices and schools in Rajasthan. Each interpreter was hired through local, professional translation services in the two districts. One interpreter was a recent university graduate in translation (two interviews), and the other was a former elementary private school teacher (four interviews). The number and key objectives of interviews are overviewed in Table 8 below for each field site, and elaborated in the rest of this section.

| Field Site | Interviewees | Interview objectives |
|---|---|---|
| Bharti Foundation headquarters (Gurgaon, National Capital Region) | 7 staff members involved in the SBS program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather perceptions of the Foundation's objectives, motivations, its desired role vis-à-vis elementary education • Triangulate and substantiate information on the external institutional frameworks of the SBS program in Rajasthan, and the bargaining power/influence of the Foundation in these frameworks |
| SBS district offices in Rajasthan in two districts | 2 staff members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather perceptions of the Foundation's objectives, motivations, its desired role vis-à-vis elementary education • Triangulate and substantiate information on the internal and external institutional frameworks of the SBS program in Rajasthan, and the bargaining power and influence of the Foundation in these frameworks • Triangulate and substantiate information on how the institutional frameworks of the SBS program are mediated and implemented in practice |
| SBS schools in Rajasthan in the same two districts | 6 head teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulate and substantiate information on the bargaining power and influence of the Foundation in the institutional framework of the program • Triangulate and substantiate information on how the institutional frameworks of the SBS program are mediated and implemented in practice |
| Via telephone (Canada to Rajasthan) | 2 officials, Rajasthan Department of Elementary Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulate and substantiate information on the external institutional framework of the SBS program in Rajasthan, and the bargaining power and influence of the Foundation in these frameworks • Gather government views on the Foundation's role and objectives vis-à-vis elementary education |

Table 8: Field Sites, number and objectives of interviews

First, I interviewed seven key informants on the SBS program at the Bharti Foundation's headquarters while I was stationed there towards the beginning of my fieldwork. They all had roles of some responsibility regarding the SBS program. Relevant informants for these interviews were determined through "snowball sampling" (Babbie, 2010, p. 208), in which contacts and referrals to informants were gleaned from earlier interviewees and informants at the Foundation. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour, and were conducted in available meeting rooms at Foundation headquarters, with access granted by the Foundation. Due to the controlled nature of the research environment at headquarters, there were few opportunities for informal interviews or additional discussions with staff.

The objective of these interviews was to triangulate and substantiate documentary data by gathering perceptions on the Foundation's objectives in engaging in elementary education; the external institutional frameworks of the SBS program in Rajasthan; and the Foundation's mediation of and influence in these institutions. Of key interest was how Foundation employees legitimized the role and influence of the Foundation in elementary education, as well as why they felt the SBS program delivered "quality" education. Semi-structured interview schedules were tailored to suit the expertise of each interviewee from a bank of questions. The broad and exploratory nature of the interview questions left room for me to be open and receptive to alternative themes and critical issues that arose throughout the interviews and research.

Second, I interviewed two foundation staff members at the Bharti Foundation's SBS district offices in Rajasthan. The interview schedules were based on a similar set of open-ended questions, but modified to gather perceptions on the Foundation's role in elementary education in Rajasthan; triangulate information on the external institutional frameworks of the SBS program in Rajasthan, and the Foundation's influence vis-à-vis these frameworks; and gain insight into how these frameworks were implemented and mediated at the state level. One interview lasted 30 minutes, and the other an hour and a half.

Third, in concert with my visits to SBS district offices, I held interviews with principals (i.e., "head teachers" from the British term) at six SBS schools throughout rural Rajasthan. Interviews lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. They followed a schedule of open-ended interview questions intended to triangulate data gathered at headquarters and district offices about the institutional frameworks of the SBS program, and seek insights into how these institutions are reflected and mediated in practice at the school level.

Finally, interviewees at Bharti Foundation headquarters also identified informants at the Rajasthan's Department of Elementary Education who could speak to the state's partnership with the Bharti Foundation through the SBS Adopted Schools model. By the time these officials responded to my invitation for an interview, I had already returned to Canada from India. Thus, I interviewed these two officials via telephone. These interviews followed a structure of open-ended interview questions intended to clarify the institutional framework of the SBS program, and also to seek the government's perceptions of the Foundation's role, influence and contributions to elementary education in Rajasthan. The interviews were conducted in English, at the interviewees' preferences, and lasted only 15 minutes each due to the interviewees' schedules. Fortunately, these interviews were largely supplementary to the data gathered through interviews and documentary analysis. Given the short time frame, I focused on questions that could potentially confirm or contest assertions that Foundation staff had made vis-à-vis the institutional framework of the SBS program in Rajasthan. For example, I asked how the state monitors SBS schools, or whether the SBS program inspired any changes in these frameworks.

4.2.1.c Non-participant observation at SBS schools

Unstructured non-participant observation in which the “purpose of the observation is clear” (Bell, 2010, p. 183) but the researcher postpones “definitions and structures until a pattern has been observed” (Bell, 2010, p. 193), was also used during the final phase of the study during SBS school visits. Planned and unannounced school visits lasted approximately three hours each, and spanned a total of three days. Each school visit took approximately half a day, with one school visit in the morning and one in the afternoon. I had originally requested a full day of observation at each school, however, Foundation staff were concerned that this would be too disruptive to classroom activities (Observation field notes, 2012d). Interviews with head teachers also had to be completed during this time.

The intention of observation activities was not to perform an evaluation of the school or the program, which was outside the scope of this study. Instead, it was to obtain an impression of the SBS program in practice, which is not possible through interviews or documentary analysis alone. Unlike these latter methods, observation can be used to discern “ongoing behaviour and events as they occur” (Bailey, 2008, p. 243), and is therefore particularly useful in educational

research in which classroom activity is observed (Burke & Christensen, 2008). Observations focused on two central activities:

- 1) I observed three classes in each school to see how teachers conducted lessons. I sat in each class for approximately 30 minutes, as observing for a full period was not possible given the short time frame of school visits. During three of the school visits, only three classes were running, so I was able to observe each class (see Section 6 for more on schools). In the other three schools, I observed the English class and two other classes. In classes conducted in Hindi, I focused on how teachers used teaching-learning materials (TLMs) in their lessons and their non-verbal interaction with students.
- 2) I toured the general school environment and its available facilities. This tour followed a protocol I generated during documentary analysis and interviews at headquarters and district offices. I observed computers, TLMs, the number of teachers and classrooms, the number of students per classroom, and key elements of school infrastructure (i.e., water and electricity availability, separate toilets for boys and girls, chalkboards, school library, school office).

In accordance with the approved ethical procedures for this study, the observations involved no interaction with students. No data on student behaviour were gathered. Teachers often initiated informal discussions with me, which were recorded in field notes if deemed relevant to the study. Observations were recorded either during or directly after the observed activities in my field notes, which resulted in 40 pages of typed field notes.

4.2.1.d School questionnaire

During SBS school visits, head teachers were also supplied with a short questionnaire designed to glean basic background information about the school and its students, including enrolment (broken down by groups including SC, ST, OBC, low-income, and girls), number of classrooms, and number of teachers. This questionnaire was provided to head teachers in either Hindi or English (based on their preference) at the beginning of my school visit and collected at the end.¹⁴ Five of the six head teachers agreed to fill out the questionnaire, citing that the required

¹⁴ I commissioned the translation of the questionnaire using a professional translation service in Delhi that I located online.

information was readily available on their laptops. One head teacher declined to complete the questionnaire as he was responsible for teaching a class after the interview and did not have time. The questionnaire was useful in determining how certain elements of the SBS program may have been realized in practice, such as its focus on enrolling students from disadvantaged groups, or having an adequate number of teachers and infrastructure. The questionnaires were analyzed using Excel to generate averages of the enrolment, funding, and other basic data on schools.

It is important to note that these self-reported data may not be entirely accurate. Head teachers, who are responsible for the conduct of the school, may have simply reported numbers that abided by the program regulations. Unfortunately, only some elements of the questionnaire could be verified through independent observation (e.g., the number of classrooms at schools). Given resource and time constraints, other elements (e.g., the number of students enrolled from disadvantaged groups) could not be independently verified. However, I was able to compare the numbers supplied by head teachers to those in the DISE database, which provides data on these schools collected by the government (though still ultimately provided by schools) around the same time period (September 2012). Some interesting aberrations were found and are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.2.2 Data analysis

4.2.2.a Phase 1: Before field research

The first phase of analysis occurred during the six months before my field trip to India in 2012. This included analysis of background documents on the organisational and institutional framework of the SBS program using publicly available documents online, including the Foundation's organisational publications and grey literature (e.g., World Bank and other reports) mentioning the Foundation and its activities.

Documents were inputted into *MaxQDA*, qualitative data analysis software. The central research questions (see Section 4.1) were applied in a preliminary analysis. For this analysis, I used "in vivo" coding, which draws on "words or short phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as codes" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 74). This type of coding is suggested as a good choice for new researchers as these codes "often point to regularities or patterns in the setting" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 75), and they privilege the participant's voice.

4.2.2.b Phase 2: During field research

Some ongoing latent analysis of data occurred during my field research. As mentioned, at the end of each interview or observation, I recorded key areas of further inquiry or emerging potential patterns in the data. This prompted me to generate new interview questions or clarifications, ask for additional documents, and pay attention to particular areas of observation in subsequent field activities. For example, in learning the emphasis the Foundation places on activity-based learning in the SBS program, I took note as to how or whether these methods seemed to be employed in classrooms during my school visits. However, most of my analysis took place after the field research was concluded.

4.2.2.c Phase 3: After field research

All documentary data, transcriptions of semi-structured interviews and field notes were inputted into my existing bank of documentary data in *MaxQDA*. This resulted in 624 different written records to analyze. Using the central research questions of this study (see Section 4.1), I performed a second round of “in vivo” coding overall, but the first round on the full dataset. I took a reflexive approach to this round of analysis (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009), in which I “continually refin[ed] insights and sharpen[ed] the focus for analysis by identifying gaps in my understandings of what was going on in the case” (p. 78). In doing so, a number of additional analytic questions became pertinent. For example, the notion of “quality education” arose as important to understanding the Foundation’s motivations for engaging in elementary education. Thus, it became necessary to unpack how the Foundation conceptualized quality education, as well as consult relevant theoretical literature to aid this analysis. Additionally, the data revealed the Foundation’s use of collective action framing, or “framing [its] preferred organizational forms as necessary, valid and appropriate” (Quinn et al., 2014, p. 952), to legitimize any real or potential influence it had in elementary education. Thus, further investigating how collective action frames were employed in the Foundation’s discourses was important to understanding how it established influence. A snapshot of the evolving analytic questions used to investigate the data are overviewed in Box 1 below.

1. **Research question:** What are the Foundation’s objectives in operating the SBS program? What are the Foundation’s strategies for achieving these objectives?

Sample refined questions guiding analysis:

- a. Did anything incentivize the Foundation’s engagement?
- b. Did the Foundation change its strategies? Why?
- c. How do the Foundation’s stated motivations compare to their behaviour?
- d. What is the Foundation’s desired role vis-à-vis elementary education?
- e. How is “quality education” dominantly framed in the SBS program?
- f. How can this conceptualization be situated in the wider literature on quality education?

2. **Research question:** What are the external formal institutions (rules, policies and enforcement mechanisms) that enable or constrain the SBS program in Rajasthan?

Sample refined questions guiding analysis:

- a. Is it clear cut or fraught with uneven application and interpretation? How?

3. **Research question:** How does the Bharti Foundation interact with/mediate this institutional framework? Does the Foundation change it? How?

Sample refined questions guiding analysis:

- a. What level of bargaining power does the Foundation have in this institutional framework?
- b. How does the Foundation establish this bargaining power?
- c. How does the Foundation legitimize this bargaining power to key program constituencies, including communities, governments and wider society?
- d. How can these legitimizing strategies be situated in the wider literature on organizations and legitimacy?

Box 1: Original research questions and sample refined analytic questions for data analysis

At this juncture, a large number of available online English media articles on the SBS program, which included interviews from Bharti Foundation employees, were also included in the analysis. These articles were relevant in further determining how the Foundation frames its role and motivations. These articles were obtained using “Google News” which provided an archive of both domestic and international media reports on the SBS program, from its establishment in 2006 to the time of writing in 2015. These media reports also served as an unanticipated source of interviews with senior executives at the Bharti Group of Companies who serve as board members for the Foundation, including CEO Sunil Mittal, who I did not have access to during field research.

I then generated wider “pattern codes” from “repeatedly observed behaviours, actions, norms, routines and relationships” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 89) that began to offer more robust insights into the Bharti Foundation’s objectives and influence in elementary education. Using these emerging pattern codes, I generated a list of “assertions and propositions” (Miles et al.,

2014, p. 101) which responded to my research questions. Some examples of these early propositions are included in Box 2 below.

Proposition 1: The Foundation frames itself as uniquely capable of providing managerial efficiency in elementary education, which government schools lack

Proposition 2: The Foundation strategically draws from its philanthropic orientation to ideologically distance itself from profit-seeking actors and combat assertions that the SBS program is a profit-seeking exercise

Box 2: Example propositions from data analysis

During the next round of coding, I rated these assertions as “strong”, “qualified”, “neutral” or “contradictory” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 100), depending on the robustness of the analytic data supporting them. At various junctures throughout this iterative process, codes, assertions and propositions were added, removed, elaborated, and further refined. Further documentary data was also sought at many points to fill analytic or informational gaps.

4.3 Researcher rapport

A couple of members from the larger project team had some interaction with some Foundation staff in a professional setting. However, this association was neither long nor deep. Additionally, I did not know anyone at the Foundation when I initiated contact by email. My thesis supervisor was asked to provide some background to the larger programme of research. After our initial meeting, the Foundation was enthusiastic about participating in the study on the basis that research studies conducted by foreign researchers on the SBS program could provide it with international exposure (Observation field notes, 2012c). It is, therefore, unsurprising that throughout the course of my field research, there was significant input and oversight on documents provided; what I could or observe; and to whom I could speak. This level of oversight may have been due to understandable concerns that any information perceived as being negative about the Foundation’s activities could reflect poorly on the Foundation staff, or perhaps, the Bharti Group of Companies.

Although I spent a substantial amount of time at Foundation headquarters, my interaction with staff was largely limited to interviews and discussions about the research, including obtaining documents and setting up interviews and field visits. While I offered to give a presentation on my proposed study to staff to explain the broad objectives and answer any

questions, I was not permitted. However, I distributed my card and a short description of my study at headquarters, to assuage any questions about my reasons for being there.

At the district and school levels, it seemed that that most teachers and district office staff were used to international visitors. I was warmly welcomed with food and some planned activities on behalf of students (e.g., a dance; recitation of an English phrase in unison). Teachers and staff at planned-visit schools seemed to take it as a compliment that I was interested in their school, and enthusiastically invited me to view lessons and activities. My reception was different at unannounced-visit schools, where head teachers and staff were understandably concerned about my presence and seemed to view me as an auditor of some kind. This initial perception was mitigated by thorough explanations about the nature and intentions of my research through the interpreter, as well as by the guaranteed anonymity in data collection and results. Following this, both head teachers were enthusiastic about sharing information on their schools and being part of the study.

4.4 Limitations of research

This study faced a number of limitations. As already discussed, there was strong oversight regarding my exposure to the program. For example, four of the six school visits were organized by the Foundation, which may have affected the authenticity of those sites. The two unannounced visits were, therefore, essential in providing a fuller illustration of the SBS program and how it may have been implemented in Rajasthan.

Secondly, as head teachers are charged with implementing the policies of the SBS program, there is the possibility that those, particularly in planned-visit schools (because of the closer relationship with the Foundation), did not feel comfortable openly speaking about challenges or limitations. For example, in interviews, all head teachers stated that their teachers were fully qualified. However one classroom teacher was quick to point out a qualified teacher shortage at their school in an informal conversation (Field notes, 2012). This reaffirms the importance of providing anonymity to participants, and triangulating data through observation and documentary analysis.

Thirdly, it seemed that head teachers wanted to exhibit their knowledge of English to me, perhaps because of the emphasis on English in the SBS curriculum. However, it also seemed that head teachers may have been able to express their views more clearly in Hindi, a suspicion that

the interpreter shared. While head teachers were made fully aware of the interpreter's services, I felt it was inappropriate to suggest interviewees change languages, so as not to make them uncomfortable or insecure. To mitigate the chance of receiving incorrect or incomplete information, I asked the interpreter to fact-check some of the potentially more controversial responses (e.g., in relation to key challenges facing the school) in Hindi in an informal style following the interview, and convey this information for my field notes.

Finally, a key limitation of this study is the eventual low number of interviews at the government level (two, lasting only 15 minutes each). This was mitigated through extensive documentary analysis of government documents, and by carefully crafting the interview schedules to touch on the most salient issues for this study (e.g., the government's relationship vis-à-vis the SBS program, whether any features from the SBS program had carried over to wider policy frameworks). This was aided by the fact that these interviews were held after my field research with the Foundation, and I therefore had time to carefully review the data and identify relevant questions.

4.5 Ethical considerations and approval

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board prior to fieldwork, in adherence with the ethical guidelines of the second edition Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (2010). The study underwent a full risk review from the Research Ethics Board. The first and most essential step required by this ethics approval was to gain consent from the Foundation to conduct a study on its program. The Foundation was electronically sent a letter of intent detailing the study's parameters and objectives. In accordance with the ethics approval for this study, the Foundation provided verbal consent to participate, and permission for the organization and program to be named during data collection, analysis, and in the final research product(s). Records of these exchanges are kept in my field notes. Two study update meetings were held with senior members of the Foundation during my field research to inform them of my next steps and gain the Foundation's ongoing consent as the study evolved. I also agreed, at the Foundation's request, to provide a short case report of my findings, which is under development pending the submission of this thesis so as to provide the most up-to-date analysis.

In accordance with article 3.2 of the TCPS 2 (2010), I provided interview participants with information on the purpose and processes of the research, as well as the possible benefits and risks of their involvement. I sought informed consent verbally before proceeding with these interviews, and recorded it in my field notes, as specified in my ethics application. As per the approved protocol for this project, verbal consent was obtained from participants in the place of written consent. Based on the extensive fieldwork experience of the larger project team, organizational representatives and head teachers in India can be suspicious of requests for signatures on any formal documentation. This could have hindered my forming a trusting relationship with participants, and cause undue stress since participation in the study did not entail disclosure of any personal or sensitive organizational information. The Tri-Council Policy Statement acknowledges this possibility, and the ethical acceptability of documented verbal consent:

...in some types of research, and for some groups or individuals, written signed consent may be perceived as an attempt to legalize or formalize the consent process ...In these cases, oral consent, a verbal agreement or a handshake may be required, rather than signing a consent form (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2010, sec. 3.12).

Ethics approval was granted on this basis by the University of Ottawa. Additionally, I ensured that the two interpreters hired for my field research in Rajasthan signed a confidentiality agreement binding them not to disclose any data obtained during their participation (e.g., including school names, locations, characteristics, interview data, participant names or characteristics, etc.).

Chapter 5: Framing the SBS program

This chapter examines the objectives of the Bharti Foundation's engagement in elementary education, and how it advanced these objectives in Rajasthan. This study found that the Bharti Foundation aimed to operate as a "quality expert" in elementary education and promote its particular vision of education quality for India. In pursuing this goal, it positioned itself as a potential "institutional entrepreneur" (DiMaggio, 1988) in the wider institutional framework for elementary education. Using Battilana et al.'s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship, the chapter examines the broad legitimizing arguments, or "collective action frames" (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988) the Foundation employed to legitimize and rationalize its "expert" engagement and its vision of educational change. The chapter concludes with an interrogation of frame "resonance" (Snow & Benford, 1988), by examining the salience of the Foundation's frames in national and global discourses and how the Foundation constructed credibility for these frames.

5.1 The SBS program: A quality model for India?

Actors must meet two conditions to be considered institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana et al., 2009). First, they must desire to initiate divergent changes from the existing "institutionalized template for organizing within a given institutional context" (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 70), and second, "actively mobilize resources to implement change" (p. 70). This study found that the Bharti Foundation's overall objective was to operate as a "quality expert" in education, offering the SBS program as a template for change to improve the quality of education throughout the state sector. According to the growing literature on embedded agency and institutional change (Battilana et al., 2009; Maguire et al., 2004; Quinn et al., 2014) (see Section 3.3), the Foundation thus sought to operate as an institutional entrepreneur, leveraging change in the wider institutional framework for education in India.

Indeed, Bharti Foundation interviewees and publications were clear about the organization's objective to change the education field's "institutionalized template" or "shared understanding of the goals to be pursued and how they are to be pursued" (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 69). The Bharti Foundation's stated objectives were ambitious:

For us, the project [SBS] is about catalyzing a larger movement in the country and ensuring that one day all schools in the country will deliver quality education to every single child in India...We are looking at building the [SBS] Program on a national level (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f, p. 123).

Interviewees similarly described the key goal of the Bharti Foundation as to become a “major player in the system” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f), or to “give another model to the country [to] bring about a change in an existing [education] system that has been running for 60 years now” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). Importantly, rather than conceptualizing itself as capable of single-handedly creating systemic change, the Foundation’s described itself as a *leader* of a change movement, asserting: “a movement alone is not sufficient to cause any real impact. It takes a revolution, and someone to lead it” (BF, 2009a, p. 31).

In line with Battilana et al.’s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship, this study found that the Foundation rationalized its desired vision of educational change through “collective action frames” (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988) (see Section 3.3.2.b). The following statement by Bharti Group CEO Sunil Mittal succinctly summarizes the core frames employed by the Foundation in constructing legitimacy for the Foundation’s role and objectives:

Notwithstanding the expansion in reach, quality of education [in India] has however remained an area of major concern, making it imperative to usher in concerted initiatives by the government and the private sector. Bharti Foundation’s entry into school education primarily aimed to address the issue of quality through the Satya Bharti School Program. Over the years, we have not only succeeded in extending the reach of our initiatives but managed *to spread the value of quality* among key stakeholders – policy makers, community leaders and most importantly, parents (Bharti Foundation, 2014a, p. 1, emphasis added).

Thus, through “diagnostic framing” (see Section 3.3.2.b), the Foundation identified the poor quality of basic (particularly public) education for disadvantaged children in India as the dominant problem it sought to address through its engagement. Schooling access was framed as a secondary problem to quality, as seen in Foundation Co-chairman and Bharti Group of Companies President, Rakesh Bharti Mittal’s opening statement to the Foundation’s 2008-2009 annual report:

Following the passing of the Right to Education Bill [Act] 2009, access to education has clearly come under renewed government focus. But quality may still remain an issue to contend with...Our experience over the years has helped us converge on the critical cornerstone of quality assurance (BF, 2009a, p. 2).

As one BF interviewee stated, “we are trying to create a model of quality education in rural India, given the challenges and constraints that exist there” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). In attributing “blame or causality” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198) for this ‘quality problem’, the Foundation “de-legitimizes existing institutional arrangements” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 79), by focusing on specific shortcomings in the government system.

Before the SBS program was launched, Foundation discourses identified the root of quality schooling issues as insufficient government resources. The 2005-2006 Foundation annual report noted that it is “not possible for the government alone to undertake the huge task to achieve the goal of universalization of primary education by 2015” (BF, 2006, p. 3). The Foundation also highlighted the “enormity of resource constraints facing the government” (BF, 2010, p. 1) in spreading quality education. Such arguments correspond with what Srivastava (2010a) terms the “scarce resources frame” (p. 525; see Section 3.2.1). Summarizing this sentiment, one Foundation staff member asserted: “[the] government cannot deliver quality education all across the country, right?” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

However more frequently, rather than attributing this lack of quality to the inadequacy of government resources, Foundation discourses pointed to a dearth in necessary attributes/abilities possessed by government actors to provide quality education. A Foundation headquarters staff member summarized the dominant Foundation framing of the issue well: “They’ve [the government] [got] all the resources, whether in terms of building, of number of teachers...unfortunately...they are not able to do that role properly” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b). Another asserted: “in most government schools, education is not happening” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012c).

In response to this core diagnostic frame, the Foundation offered a prognostic frame or “strategies, tactics and targets” to engage in “ameliorative and corrective action” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 201). As encapsulated by Sunil Mittal’s quote above (Bharti Foundation, 2014a, p. 1, emphasis added), the Foundation reasoned that policymakers must “usher in concerted initiatives by the government and the private sector” (i.e., PPPs) that “spread the value of quality among key stakeholders” (Bharti Foundation, 2014a, p. 1). This action of “spreading

the value of quality” is captured in the Foundation’s often-stated strategy through the SBS program to “create replicable and scalable models of quality education which can be leveraged towards a larger, national impact” (BF, 2010, p. 37). It is interesting to note here that, rather than a goal naturally evolving from the growth and success of the Foundation’s interventions over time, the Foundation asserted this strategy from the first year of its engagement in basic education in 2006, voicing its “firm belief that the standards set by ‘Satya Bharti Schools’ will provide quality and performance benchmarks to our other programs, to Government [*sic*] schools and also to hundreds of other NGOs who are working in the area of education” (BF, 2007, p. 7).

The accepted logic behind these assertions is that the Foundation had particular abilities that it could and should apply to address key education quality problems. To unpack this logic, it is necessary to understand how the Foundation framed quality in education. As numerous scholars remind us, quality education is a subjective concept (Barrett, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nickel, & Ukpo, 2006; Gray, 1990; Sayed, 2011). Smith (1996) cautions against such “norm-referenced” terms, arguing that “quality” has served as a “catch-all” (p. 76) term for policy-makers, NGOs and other private actors to garner an “unquestioned acceptance” (Cornwall, 2007, p. 481) of their agendas. Cornwall (2007) suggests that the best way to expose such catch-all usage is by “taking apart the different meanings that [such words] have acquired as they have come to be used in development discourse” (p. 481), an approach attempted below.

5.2 The SBS philosophy of quality

As Tikly (2011) attests, any definition of quality rests on an “understanding of the underlying purpose of education” (p. 9), which can vary among societies, groups and individuals. Thus, examining what the Foundation framed as this “underlying purpose” will be instructive in determining the Foundation’s framing of quality. This can be accomplished through examining a third framing process in Foundation discourses, i.e., motivational framing. To coalesce allies to support their efforts, institutional entrepreneurs must “frame proposed changes as being mutually beneficial” and therefore introduce themselves as a “neutral broker acting on behalf of the common good” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 81).

Here the Foundation drew on discourses centering on its responsibility to address education issues, asserting in publications that “it is time that Corporate [*sic*] India stepped in to jointly shoulder this responsibility with the government and undertake initiatives in the field of

education” (Field notes on internal documents, 2012b). More specifically, the Foundation framed this responsibility as resting upon “corporate India’s” role in supporting India’s potential economic prowess in a globalized economy:

With the world becoming smaller by the day, thanks to multiple technology revolutions unfolding around us, the current generation of children have a real chance of making the nation proud on the world stage...It is our collective responsibility today to ignite the power of these young minds (BF, 2014a, p. 1).

Indeed, from the early days of the program in 2006, Foundation discourses attempted to coalesce support through referencing India’s potential demographic dividend: “it is only prudent to build on our [India’s] people ‘advantage’ more diligently...Quality education [is] the biggest contributor to economic success” (BF, 2008a, p. 1). In a television interview with India’s *Economic Times*, Rakesh Bharti Mittal further asserted:

...this program [SBS] is not just about education, this program is about changing lives of those rural children...so that every child, who passes from this Satya Bharti school program, are employable, or self-employed. That is the basic agenda and why this entire program was started (Economic Times Now, 2013, television show).

Foundation publications warned that corrective action through initiatives such as its SBS program was necessary to “ensure education does not become a stumbling block in the country’s growth and progress” (BF, 2010, p. 2). This conceptualization echoes a primarily “human capital” approach to understanding education quality in which “the central rationale for investing in education (including more recently education quality) lies in the contribution that education can make to economic growth” (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 4).

Crucially, the Foundation appeared to be most concerned about enhancing a particular aspect of India’s global economic activity through education — India’s growth as a major player in the global knowledge economy. Foundation discourses framed the SBS program as a timely intervention capitalizing on India’s demographic dividend, and “put[ting] India on the trajectory to develop into a knowledge economy, one village at a time” (BF, 2011b, p. 8). For example, in introducing the SBS program, an early annual report stated:

India is fast emerging as a global force in the knowledge economy and one of our biggest strengths is the young population of our country. To continue to support this growth, the need of the hour is to promote higher education, specialization and entrepreneurship among underprivileged children and youth (BF, 2008a, p. 17).

Drawing on this human capital framing of education, the Foundation reasoned that business organizations had an important role in this equation. This conceptualization is captured well in an opening address to a Foundation annual report by Sunil Mittal:

India is at the threshold of leadership on the world stage...I firmly believe that business organizations have a big role to play in this... During the year, Bharti Foundation further strengthened operations in its focus area – ‘providing free quality education to underprivileged children’ - giving more children the opportunity to participate in India’s growth story... (BF, 2011b, p. 1)

When asked to elaborate why they felt that businesses, including the Bharti Group of Companies, had a “big role” to play in education rather than in another sector (e.g., health, food security), a senior Foundation staff member asserted that it was “in their [the Bharti Group’s] capacity to help deliver education” (Observation field notes, 2012e). Similarly, in reference to the success of the Bharti Group of Companies CEO Sunil Mittal in the telecom industry, the first Foundation annual report claimed, “[if] we could do it for a company, we could do it in a sector [education]” (BF, 2006, p. 15). Foundation publications elaborated on this claim:

There is...a belief in the inherent potential of human beings that can be realized through the two main triggers of education and technology. So while Bharti Airtel has changed the face of the country through technology, it was time that the Bharti Group ventured into the field of education (Field notes on internal documents, 2012b).

Of importance here is that by framing the key consequences of India’s education “quality problem” as linked to India’s performance as a knowledge economy, the Bharti Foundation, through its association with one of India’s largest and most profitable ICT companies, could more easily champion itself as uniquely positioned to provide “solutions, tactics and targets to engage in ameliorative or corrective action” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 201) in the form of the SBS program. As will be explored throughout the remainder of the chapter, this motivational frame operated as an organizational principle that has important ramifications for the rest of the Foundation’s engagement.

5.2.1 The SBS quality model

Different approaches to achieving education quality will place emphasis on different processes, outcomes and inputs stemming from their underlying philosophies (Barrett et al.,

2006). The Bharti Foundation provides a model of “quality” as defined in a promotional presentation on the SBS program (BF, 2013, p. 10). The model contains three central outcomes and inputs (i.e., “engagement with school”, “teacher motivation” and “learning levels and holistic development”), and six additional related processes (i.e., “teacher selection, training & accountability”; “assessments and growth”; “teaching learning material and teachers guides”; “activity-based learning including community campaigns”; “joyful learning and child-friendly infrastructure”; “community engagement and parent involvement”) (BF, 2013, p. 10).

This model seemingly contrasts to the “outcomes-oriented” models many scholars fear from corporate philanthropic engagement in education (Ball, 2008; Hess, 2005b; Saltman, 2010). It is circular and rejects what Tikly and Barret (2011) term, the “process model”, popular in human capital understandings of education quality, in which “inputs, in the form of financial and material resources, teachers and pupil characteristics are acted on by educational processes producing outcomes” (p. 4). Rather, it appears to prioritize processes, outcomes, and inputs equally, and echoes Tikly’s (2011) social justice framing of education quality in which “outcomes...depend on the particular mix of ingredients (inputs and processes) and the interaction between environments” (p. 11).

While this image begins to offer a helpful overview of the Foundation’s quality model, interviews with Foundation staff and a thorough analysis of Foundation publications offered more a robust picture of how the Foundation framed quality. The twelve key elements of the Foundation’s quality model that emerged most dominantly in the discourses of the Foundation as found in this study, are summarized in Table 9 below, loosely categorized as outcomes, processes and inputs.

| Aspect of quality education | Key elements in SBS model |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased learning levels in core subjects (e.g., languages, maths), at the same cost per-child as government schools • The ‘holistic development’ of children, aiming to make them confident, responsible, employable and independent |
| Processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Professional’ management and governance structures • Standardized operating processes with clear roles and responsibilities laid out • An inclusive pedagogy and curriculum which emphasizes child-centric, activity-based teaching and learning • Stringent audit and monitoring procedures • Significant community engagement |
| Inputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-friendly infrastructure, including using the building as a learning aid • ‘Free’ education (free tuition, uniforms, supplies, mid-day meals, etc...) • Locally-selected and intensively trained teachers and school leaders • A curriculum with a strong emphasis on English language learning • Activity-oriented teaching-learning materials • Significant use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) |

Table 9: Key aspects of SBS quality model emerging from data analysis

Crucially, the Foundation publicly emphasized certain aspects of the quality model in its discourses more than others, particularly those that legitimized its role in operating as a “quality expert” through the program.

5.2.1.a Emphasis on managerial efficiency

Two main composite frames can be teased out from these wider discourses that further demonstrate how the Foundation framed education quality. These frames employed “rhetorical strategies” found by Battilana et al. (2009) to be commonly used by institutional entrepreneurs as they attempt to mobilize a wide base of constituents through “connecting their innovations to familiar templates, while at the same time emphasizing the need for change” (2009, p. 78). The first frame conceptualized the managerial “efficiency” of the Foundation as an antidote to what the Foundation identified as key managerial issues in government schools. Rakesh Bharti Mittal

clearly captured this frame in a plea to the government to consider PPPs as the “key” to education issues:

...we are spending billions of dollars but is that being delivered efficiently? The answer is no, all of us know that, and that’s why we keep going back to the government; public-private partnerships is [*sic*] going to be the key to move forward, you [the government] have the resources we have the management expertise...let’s join hands (Live Mint Online, 2013).

The Foundation seemingly based its claim to managerial expertise on the logic that the Bharti Group’s managerial success in the business sector would be transferable to success in the education sector. For example, when asked in a television interview how the organization came up with “a model that works”, Bharti Group chairman Rakesh Mittal asserted, “it [the SBS program] is no different than running a business at Bharti...it is the same amount of reviews, it is the same amount of passion from the team...the only difference is my team at Bharti Foundation does not have a bottom line for delivery” (Economic Times Now, 2013, television show). In a draft of a speech written for Rakesh Mittal’s acceptance of the Foundation’s World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) prize in 2012, one of the Foundation’s key schooling quality interventions was highlighted as its ability to bring a streamlined, “process orientation” to schooling by drawing on the organization’s business linkages (Field notes on internal documents, 2012e), Sunil Mittal was similarly quoted in a report: “the purpose here, as in all our business initiatives, is to achieve scale while ensuring quality” (BF, 2009a, p. 1).

Here the Foundation can be seen employing a common rhetorical framing strategy of institutional entrepreneurs in using analogies to “articulate, manipulate and recombine institutional logics” from different “institutional vocabularies” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 79), in this case, the corporate and education fields. Specifically, the Foundation pointed to its parent company’s success in developing and ‘scaling’ successful telecommunications products to imply similar potential success with schooling.

In order to coalesce allies, institutional entrepreneurs will also “exacerbate contradictions among opponents by emphasizing the failings of the existing institutionalized practices and norms” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 80). In an interview with an Indian newspaper, the CEO of the Bharti Foundation further detailed some of these managerial issues with government schools: “We do seem to have a problem with the government education system...more than funds, accountability [is] lacking in government schools, which is where private parties could play a

role if they were given operational control” (The Hindu, 2013 (abridged in article)). Highlighting additional “efficiency issues”, Sunil Mittal stated in an interview with the media:

Education has got a lot of importance in our country and the government is doing its bit through initiatives like the Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan. What’s needed is better delivery and monitoring to strengthen the government’s efforts. Again, we reiterate, PPP is a robust model to pursue to take quality education across India (S. Chopra, 2013).

Foundation interviewees further argued that the system of public provision in many states exhibited inefficiencies in not only its “organizational structure”, “monitoring” and “accountability”, but in its “decision-making speed” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b, 2012c).

5.2.1.b Emphasis on economic relevance

In addition to framing the organization as uniquely capable of improving the management of education, Foundation discourses asserted that it could also improve the *content* of education. This frame is captured in the Foundation CEO’s statement that “private sector [*sic*] can play a major role in ensuring that our youth has relevant skills and knowledge to enhance their employability and hence contribute towards the country’s growth” (Natti, 2014). In an opening address to a Foundation annual report, Sunil Mittal elaborated: “it is our duty to ensure that our future generations have the right values, commitment and skill sets to help them navigate the challenges that lie ahead” (BF, 2011b, p. 2).

This frame was often employed in Foundation publications’ frequent reference to the SBS program’s focus on developing “21st century skills” in children (BF, 2011b, p. 26), which are most dominantly referred to in its SBS program as English skills, computer skills, and the right “values-system” (see Section 6.4). Although never clearly defining this value-system, some of the most often-mentioned values professed by the Foundation in its literature were individual responsibility, “commitment to their [the students’] society”, and global citizenship (BF, 2012b, p. i). One senior Foundation staff member felt that, as a corporate foundation, it had an advantage in this respect:

We bring up children who are connected to the world. OK? So...internet...You see these are village kids. So one thing that we do, and that’s our advantage of being a corporate foundation, [*is*] make sure that corporate executives go into our schools...So on the one hand we’re bringing up children with the right kind of value system, on the

other hand, we're giving them exposure so that they would know about the world. We're hoping that a combination of the two would make them responsible citizens of the world (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

This conceptualization of the “world” as distinctly corporate, and accessed through meeting business executives and using the Internet, asserts a vision of students who grow up to become potential members of corporate India, in particular the knowledge economy. Through this vision, the Foundation championed itself as able to make a unique contribution to the content of schooling.

5.3 Frame resonance

As argued by Benford and Snow (2000), the potential success of these frames in supporting the Foundation's institutional entrepreneurship in Rajasthan and beyond could be attributed to a phenomenon termed “frame resonance”, or “the effectiveness or mobilizing potency of proffered framings” (p. 619). They identify two variables to account for this relative success: the “credibility of the proffered frame” and its “relative salience” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619).

5.3.1 Frame salience

Benford and Snow (1988) describe frame salience as the “centrality”, “range” and “interrelatedness” of a frame within the “internal structure of the larger belief system or ideology within which the movement seems to seek to effect some form of alignment” (p 205). Indeed, the Foundation's core frames strongly echoed with dominant formal policy frameworks and concepts in India. For example, the Foundation legitimized its discourses through directly drawing on wider government policy frameworks, such as the *National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental & Economic Responsibilities of Business* (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2011). Specifically, the Foundation identified its engagement through the SBS program as “Principle 8” of these guidelines, which encourages businesses to “support development priorities at local and national levels” (Field Notes on internal documents, 2012). In an opening address to a recent Foundation annual report, Sunil Mittal stated: “As business leaders, it is imperative that we accord the necessary sanctity to this document and incorporate practices relevant to our business processes” (BF, 2011b, p. 1). This “imperative” has strengthened significantly in recent years, most notably with the passing of *India's Companies Act, 2013* (Parliament of India, 2013, sec. 135 (5)) (see Section 2.1).

Supportive discourses for the Bharti Foundation’s quality model could also be found at the Rajasthan government level. For example, when asked why the government had opted to partner with the Bharti Foundation specifically through the REI, government officials in this study cited “the reputation of this organization” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012a). One official stated that the Foundation had demonstrated that “things can be done...if you put enough effort into it” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). Upon signing the MOU, the Government of Rajasthan’s Principal Secretary of Education went as far as to state:

I am sure that [the Bharti Foundation] with its vision, commitment, and access to experts in technology and education would not only be able to bring the Government [*sic*] schools effective programs, but also best practices in teaching for village-based schools... lead[ing] to more effective management and ensur[ing] efficient and effective delivery of education to children (BF, 2008a, p. 28).

This statement echoed the Foundation’s emphasis on its managerial expertise, and was made despite the Foundation having only been active in basic education for less than a year, with no external or conclusive audits of the SBS program completed. In the years leading up to the SBS program’s establishment, the Central government similarly extolled the “expertise” that private actors could bring to help solve education issues, as stated in India’s Tenth Five-Year Plan:

The task of providing basic education in a country with diverse conditions is so stupendous that it is difficult to expect the government to do this effectively...the private sector can contribute not only in monetary and material terms, but *also in the form of expertise for improving quality* (Planning Commission, 2002, sec. 2.2.7, emphasis added)

As already described in Section 2.2, India has become historically more open to PPPs since its neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, which saw the state ceding power to private actors in the design and implementation of education (K. Kumar, 2012; Srivastava, 2010b). Echoing the Foundation’s focus on its affiliation with a successful knowledge economy corporation, the Twelfth Plan (2012-2015) legitimized private engagement in education by drawing on India’s potential economic growth:

In a liberalized global economy where there is a pursuit for achieving excellence, *the legitimate role of private providers of quality education* not only needs to be recognized, but also encouraged. Public-Private Partnership needs not necessarily mean only seeking private investments to supplement governmental efforts, but also encouraging innovation

in education that the government schools may lack (Planning Commission, 2008, sec. 1.1.47)

This quote, similar to the previous one above, also emphasizes that investment alone is not the rationale for PPPs. Rather, the state is seeking private sector ideas and expertise. Indeed, reflecting a policy climate conducive to its frames, the Bharti Foundation is not the only organization championing the “quality prognostic” in government education systems. Table 10 below positions the Foundation alongside some other private philanthropic actors in India that were mentioned in interviews and in the literature. Each of these actors references the goal of addressing systemic education quality issues in the country through different public-private partnership modalities.¹⁵

| Philanthropic actor | Type* | Key activities in basic education in India | Stated objective(s) for involvement in education |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Bharti Foundation (India) | Corporate foundation (Primarily operating) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private elementary schools for rural children (SBS Program) • PPPs to improve public schools for rural children (Satya Bharti Adopted Schools model) | “To improve the accessibility and quality of education in rural India” (BF, 2015a) |
| ICICI Bank Foundation (India) | Corporate foundation (Primarily operating) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and teacher education reform programs • Curriculum and textbook development in public schools | “To improve the quality of schooling processes and outcomes in the public education system in India” (ICICI Foundation, 2015, website) |
| Azim Premji Foundation (India) | Individual foundation (Primarily operating) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPPs to improve public schools for poor children • State and district institutes to improve government education systems | “Make deep, large scale and institutionalized impact on the quality and equity of education in India” (Azim Premji Foundation, 2015, website). |
| Naandi Foundation (India) | Individual foundation (Operating) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality interventions in public schools across the country, including promoting a ‘Cooperative Reflective Learning’ curriculum and providing third-party evaluation | “Improving the way learning takes place in state-run schools” (Naandi Foundation, 2015) |

Table 10: The quality prognostic in private foundation activities in India

Note: *: Characterised as per typology presented in Section 3.1.1.

¹⁵ The intention of this study is not to provide a comparative analysis or overview of key private philanthropic actors working in education in India. This chart is intended to illustrate the prevalence of private philanthropic actors, currently and at the time of field research in 2012 that profess the objective of improving the quality of education systems. It is not intended to be exhaustive but includes other major foundations mentioned during interviews and identified during the literature review for this study.

5.3.2 Frame credibility: “Better” than government schools

The Foundation drew on another key aspect of frame resonance in addition to frame salience, i.e., frame “credibility”, defined as “consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Particularly in the early days of the program, the Foundation can be seen drawing on its credibility as a frame articulator to strengthen its frames, strongly appealing to the position of the Bharti Group of Companies as a successful corporation in India’s knowledge economy. This affiliation was used to legitimize the Foundation’s ability to offer more “efficient”, “accountable” and “relevant” education models. Benford and Snow (2000) explain the utility of this aspect of frame resonance by the logic that “hypothetically, the greater the status and/or perceived expertise of the frame articulator and/or the organization they represent from the vantage point of potential adherents and constituents, the more plausible and resonant the framings or claims” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 621).

As laid out in the literature review, Lorenzo-Molo (2009) and Porter and Kramer (2002) highlight the importance of distinguishing between philanthropy as emerging directly from corporations, and philanthropy as carried out by established corporate foundations (see Section 3.1.1). Indeed, although housed in Airtel headquarters in Gurgaon, the Bharti Foundation had a separate mandate, resources, CEO, and staff than its parent companies. No Bharti Group of Companies executives were encountered during fieldwork or observations for this study.

Nevertheless, the Foundation strategically perpetuated this conflation. Despite the organizational divide, many Foundation staff members attested to the corporate nature of the organization, with one senior staff member stating: “we are very corporate...and this pervades everything we do” (Field notes, 2012c). In a newspaper interview, Foundation CEO Vijay Chadda similarly summarized what gives the Foundation a ‘quality advantage’ over others: “We are a ‘corporate’ non-government organization with a professional approach to the work we do” (Cause Because Online, 2015).

This conflation is also captured in frequent references by individual Bharti Group of Companies’ executives to SBS schools as “my schools” (Economic Times Now, 2013; Mittal, 2011; The Economic Times, 2006). The Foundation also referred to its activities as a vessel for the vision and mission of Bharti Group of Companies, captured in statements such as: “Bharti Group of Companies in particular, through Bharti Foundation, has taken upon itself the mandate

to take quality education to the rural hinterland” (BF, 2008c, p. 1). In many interviews, respondents used the Foundation’s name as interchangeable with “Airtel”, the Group’s telecommunications company (Observation field notes, 2012d).

Additionally, the Foundation drew on another aspect of frame credibility, empirical credibility, to increase the resonance of its frames, and legitimize its role as an education “expert”. Verger (2012) describes frame credibility as “convincing cause and effect arguments” (p. 30), which Benford and Snow (2000) qualify are not based on “whether diagnostic and prognostic claims are actually factual or valid, but whether their empirical referents lend themselves to being read as ‘real’ indicators of the diagnostic claim” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 620). Srivastava (2010a) terms this “the selective use of what is considered evidence” (p. 524).

For example, the Foundation pointed to its ability to mobilize financial resources from corporate donors as a clear indication of its success in achieving managerial efficiency: “professional processes, governance structures, transparent operating procedures and financial reporting have enabled several corporates to come forward and support the Program either through their earmarked CSR funds or through philanthropic gestures” (BF, 2014a, p. 35). The Foundation reports that it has received donations, both in-kind and monetary, from over 170 corporate or individual donors (BF, 2013, p. 28). Some major examples include (See Appendix 2 for a full list of partners):

- Google India: granted \$USD 5 million to upgrade 50 SBS primary schools to the elementary level (BF, 2011a)
- Deutsche Bank: contributed to the operational costs of four schools in Ludhiana, Punjab (BF, 2013)
- Microsoft India: donated software to SBS schools (BF, 2012a).

However, the key source of empirical evidence that Foundation interviewees offered to support its engagement as an expert was the “better quality” of SBS schools as compared to government alternatives. As one Foundation staff member stated: “[when] you compare [SBS schools with] what is happening to....children of government schools...you have a sense of satisfaction ... that you are providing good education to the students” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b). Foundation staff asserted this view despite key challenges:

“though of course our teachers are not that competent and things like that... we’re definitely better than the government schools” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f).

Throughout the course of this study, the Foundation continuously drew on two key sources of evidence to assert that it has achieved “better quality” than government schools through the SBS program: increased enrolment and learning levels as compared to government schools (at the same per-child cost), and evidence for what Foundation termed “holistic development” in SBS students. Indeed, when asked what made an SBS school better quality than surrounding alternatives, all SBS head teachers in this study cited higher learning levels as a discernable difference. The Foundation also pointed to enrolment levels as an indicator of quality. As one Foundation staff member described it: “despite the incentives being given by the government to get the children to the government school [mid-day meal, scholarships, etc...], parents still prefer to send their children to [SBS] schools, because they’re getting that quality education” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b).

Furthermore, in line with the relevance frame the Foundation employed to legitimize its engagement (see Section 5.2.1.b), Foundation interviewees frequently noted that SBS students were more “holistically developed” than students in surrounding schools. In an opening address in a Foundation annual report, Rakesh Bharti Mittal elaborated:

When we started the program, all of us believed that the high learning levels of our children was [sic] going to be the key differentiator for our schools. Not many of us had realized the potential of ‘holistic education’ as a driver of social change and not just academic excellence. Our training in leadership, communication and other life skills ...[is] helping them to grow up to be not only employable but confident and responsible citizens with a strong sense of commitment towards the society (BF, 2013, p. 2).

Importantly, as discussed above, the Foundation identified the key-underlying problem of low quality as in part rooted in the inefficient management of education. Therefore, the Foundation used an additional strategy to construct empirical credibility: it claimed to achieve this “better” comparative quality (captured in higher learning levels and holistic development) at the same per-child cost as rural government schools. Foundation staff asserted that “as a Foundation what we are trying to do is a cost-effective demonstration” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). Indeed, the Foundation website affirms that “the per-child cost is kept at a minimum and at par with government costs” (BF, 2015b). This was characterized as sending a message to the government: “Here’s another way of doing it... a much less cost-

intensive way but higher on impact” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). This adds an interesting rationale in addition to philanthropic intentions behind the Foundation’s concerted effort to make education “absolutely free of cost” (BF, 2013, p. 1) for poor and disadvantaged households, with one staff member affirming that “we are doing exactly what a government school is *supposed* to do” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012c, emphasis added).

5.4 Discussion

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Foundation’s mobilizing discourses strongly echo with the “contested claims” supporting philanthropic engagement in education in the literature, increasing their overall salience. Primarily, the Foundation can be seen drawing from the economic relevance and managerial efficiency claims unpacked in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of the literature review. To a lesser degree, the Foundation’s emphasis on developing a “replicable” and “scalable” quality model also resonates with the “innovation” claim discussed in Section 3.2.4. Notably, the Foundation can be seen eschewing the “scarce resources” frame (Section 3.2.1), still largely promoted by government actors in India (Srivastava, 2014), in favour of the notion that it is not resources, but expertise in schooling management and relevance that it can offer education systems.

As discussed in the literature review, critics raise a number of concerns regarding these claims. With respect to managerial efficiency, scholars warn that, in relying on their managerial expertise to guide their activities, philanthropic actors can take an exclusionary “top-down” approach to their programming, and promote technicist solutions ill-suited to education systems (Ball, 2012a; Hess, 2005a; Saltman, 2010; Watkins, 2011). Furthermore, an emphasis on economic relevance at primary education levels is seen as problematic by many scholars (Ball, 2010; Tikly & Barrett, 2007), as other important outcomes of primary education can be deprioritized, chiefly its function in realizing rights and fostering empowered, responsible citizens. Others argue that it can lead to models which reflect a company’s own concerns and skills deficits without taking into consideration national education priorities (Love, 2008; Watkins, 2011). Indeed, though the immediate benefits to the Bharti Group of Companies are not clearly articulated by the Foundation, its role in steering the state’s model of education quality would be potentially beneficial to its position as an ICT leader, a sector which the National

Association of Software and Service Companies reports is facing a “chronic skills shortage” in India (Reuters, 2015). This reflects North’s (1990) assertion that organizations will ultimately “encourage society to invest in the kinds of skills and knowledge that indirectly contribute to their profitability” (p. 80). The constitutive effects of the Foundation’s frames in this respect are discussed thoroughly in Chapter 7.

In addition to these concerns, scholars also note that despite the strong salience of these claims in popular and policy discourses, there is a marked dearth of concrete evidence to support the superior management, economic relevance, and overall “quality” of private foundation programs (Verger, 2012; Srivastava & Oh, 2010). In response to this dearth, the following chapter provides an interrogation of the empirical credibility of the Foundation’s mobilizing frames by providing an illustration of the SBS program in practice.

Chapter 6: The SBS program in practice

This chapter interrogates the Foundation's mobilizing frames as described in Chapter 5 by examining how the accepted logics underpinning these frames were reflected in the Foundation's work. The intention is not to systematically or substantially examine whether SBS schools delivered "better quality" than available alternatives for SBS students. Rather, focusing on the state of Rajasthan, the chapter draws from documentary analysis, interviews and observations to provide an illustration of how the SBS philosophy and model of quality translates in practice. In so doing, it critically questions the empirical credibility of the Foundation's discourses regarding its ability to operate as a "quality expert" in the field of education.

6.1 The SBS quality model: The importance of uniformity

In line with the Foundation's assertion that it would "create replicable and scalable models of quality education which can be leveraged towards a larger, national impact" (BF, 2010, p. 37), scaling the SBS program to a wide number of states and districts was evidently important to the Foundation since the program commenced (BF, 2007). Foundation staff asserted that the standardization and uniformity of all SBS schools was important to the program's scaling: "If we find something we like, we try to implement it, but before implementing, we think that, will it work for all 254 schools or not? We [have had] to develop a control system" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a). The Foundation emphasized that "anything we do that cannot be taken to one million primary schools is not worth doing" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

This uniformity was enforced across both SBS Greenfield and Adopted School models. Indeed, many BF interviewees emphasized the fact that under the Adopted Schools model, government schools completely "became" SBS schools. As one Foundation interviewee asserted: "there is no difference...All schools [are] run identically the same. That's it, finished. They're Satya Bharti schools" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f). The *SBS Operating Manual* is a key tool in ensuring this uniformity, setting out approximately 49 key processes related to teacher training and curriculum implementation, finance, human resources, registration, and other areas, to be followed in each SBS school, whether adopted or Greenfield (See Appendix 1 for a full list of processes). The manual states, "processes are made for even the most

seemingly simplistic activities” (Field notes on internal documents, 2012b), including school assembly, mid-day meals, as well as the more “complex classroom transactions” (p. 55) such as curriculum implementation. It boils down school operations to approximately 175 pages. The manual was described by one Foundation staff member as: a “Bible for us [...] in one day... you are able to understand [the SBS program] by going to this” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f). Another asserted: “this operating manual is a very unique thing... [it] is different from the rest of the schools in India and probably most part[s] of the world [...] [and] make[s] a Satya Bharti School [a] standalone school [that] is setting the benchmark for other schools” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a). To ensure it was followed, the Foundation ostensibly conducted awareness programs with school staff and special orientation sessions for head teachers. Indeed, the manual was observed in the head teacher’s office in all schools in this study. This study found considerable evidence to support statements on the uniformity of the program. The only key differences found between the two models during this study were subtle differences in their regulatory frameworks, monitoring systems and infrastructure. These differences will be contextualized in the rest of the chapter, which explores how different aspects of the SBS “quality model” (i.e. processes, inputs and outcomes) were reflected in practice in a small sample of schools in Rajasthan.

6.2 SBS quality processes

6.2.1 Program governance and management

Reflecting the Foundation’s claim to managerial efficiency as described in Section 5.2.1, Foundation interviewees took great pride in the governance and management of the SBS program, often describing these areas as the program’s greatest strengths. Bharti Foundation annual reports emphasize the SBS program’s “dynamic structure with clear roles, measurable deliverables, appropriate authority, and standard operating procedures and policies” (BF, 2010, p. 28). Overall, it was described as a model which addressed the lack of accountability, significant teacher attrition and poor teaching-learning activity in government schools more generally.

Foundation operations were led by a CEO, and supported by a number of departments at Foundation headquarters and a decentralized field structure (see Figure 2 on next page). At the time of field research in 2012, headquarters staff in Gurgaon represented only a small part of the

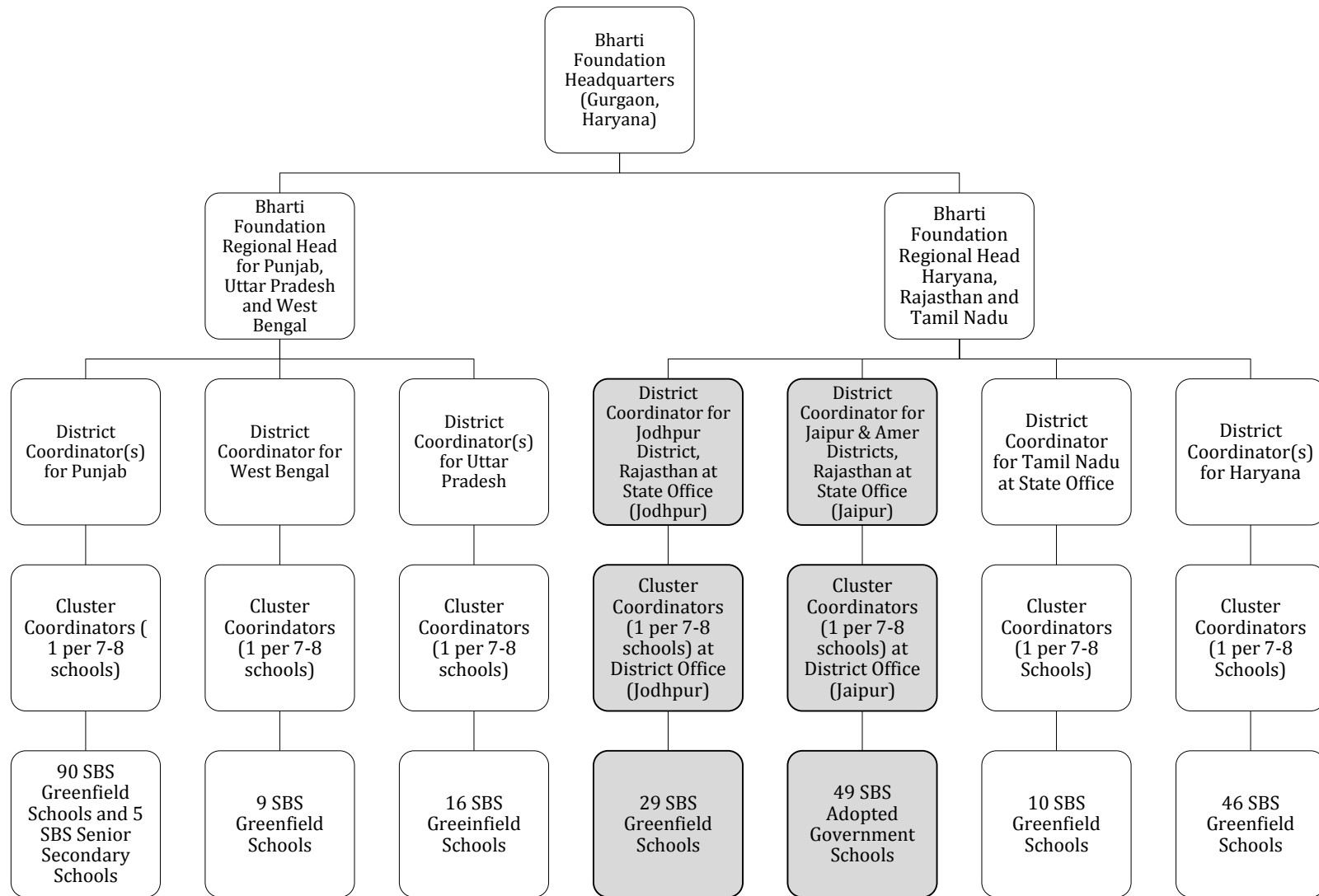


Figure 2: Bharti Foundation organogram for the SBS program in 2012

Source: (BF, 2012a); Interviews with Bharti Foundation staff

Note: Rajasthan field structure shaded

organization, which was dispersed amongst field staff, including: regional heads (2), district coordinators (approximately 7), and cluster coordinators (1 per 7-8 SBS schools, approximately 32). The Foundation was also governed by a board of trustees and a board of governors composed primarily of executives of the parent Bharti Group of Companies. This is typical of most corporate foundations (van Fleet, 2011a).

Foundation literature emphasized that all SBS schools and teachers were held accountable for their performance through a highly decentralized monitoring framework that included regular frequent classroom observation and feedback sessions (BF, 2011b) (see Figure 2). Bharti Foundation “cluster coordinators” were meant to visit each school, observe lessons, and assess teachers on predefined parameters using a series of checklists to design appropriate mentorship sessions and training plans (BF, 2014e). All head teachers interviewed for this study confirmed that cluster coordinators visited their school at least once every two weeks. Additionally, schools were required to submit a monthly school report, which provided a database of learning levels, enrolment figures, dropouts, attendance, and curriculum completion. Schools were also periodically audited to ensure that records match with the submitted data (Field notes on internal documents, 2012c). In fact, two audits were conducted during the field research for this study, but the contents were not shared. ICTs also played a role in monitoring. Each head teacher was given a laptop with a Bharti Airtel internet stick, so that head teachers could communicate with headquarters staff and submit monthly reports. This was the only example found in this study of Bharti Airtel products being used in the SBS program.

A core difference between the SBS Adopted and Greenfield models is that the latter are meant to be run in perpetuity by the Foundation (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f). According to the MOU, the SBS Adopted Schools model is rather meant to “build the capacity of these schools and education authorities to sustain the changes brought in by [the Foundation]” (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 4.6), with the aim of eventually transferring the schools back to government authorities. Thus, the MOU calls for an added layer of management on behalf of the state government. Specifically, the MOU calls for the following governance framework:

BF [Bharti Foundation] shall form District Level Steering Committees for the districts...with representation from the District Education Department, local community and BF functionaries to monitor the project and seek approval for any additional mid-course activities (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 4.8).

Interviewed government officials confirmed the creation of a district-level steering committee for the SBS Adopted Schools model which “looks at progress we [the government and the Foundation] have made” and “makes the corrections that we [the government] suggest[s]” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012a). The interviewees described this committee as having block-level representation, district-level representation, and representation at the core state level including of Rajasthan’s Principal Secretary of Education (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b; see Section 2.2.1 for overview of Rajasthan administrative structure for education). Figure 3 below provides an overview of the wider governance structure of government schools in Rajasthan, including the position of the REI and SBS Adopted Schools model in this structure.

The MOU also calls for support from the wider School Education Department to help carry out curriculum development and teacher training:

School Education Department [of Rajasthan] will facilitate the collaboration between BF and all the concerned [government] agencies (like DIETs [District Institute for Education and Training], CRCs [Cluster Resource Centres] etc.) to carry out the activities on teachers’ training, curriculum development etc. by BF. (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 5.1, 5.2).

Indeed, a government official with the REI asserted that “[the] government is monitoring the [SBS] schools...as it monitors its other schools...all block education officers, the district education officers, these [SBS adopted] schools are under them” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012a). A head teacher of one adopted school in this study stated that either government Block or District Elementary Education Officers visited their school on average two or three times a year. Meanwhile, the other adopted school head teacher claimed that “they [the government] do not come, because they know that all the topics and systems [in the school] are perfect” (Interview with SBS head teacher, 2012b).

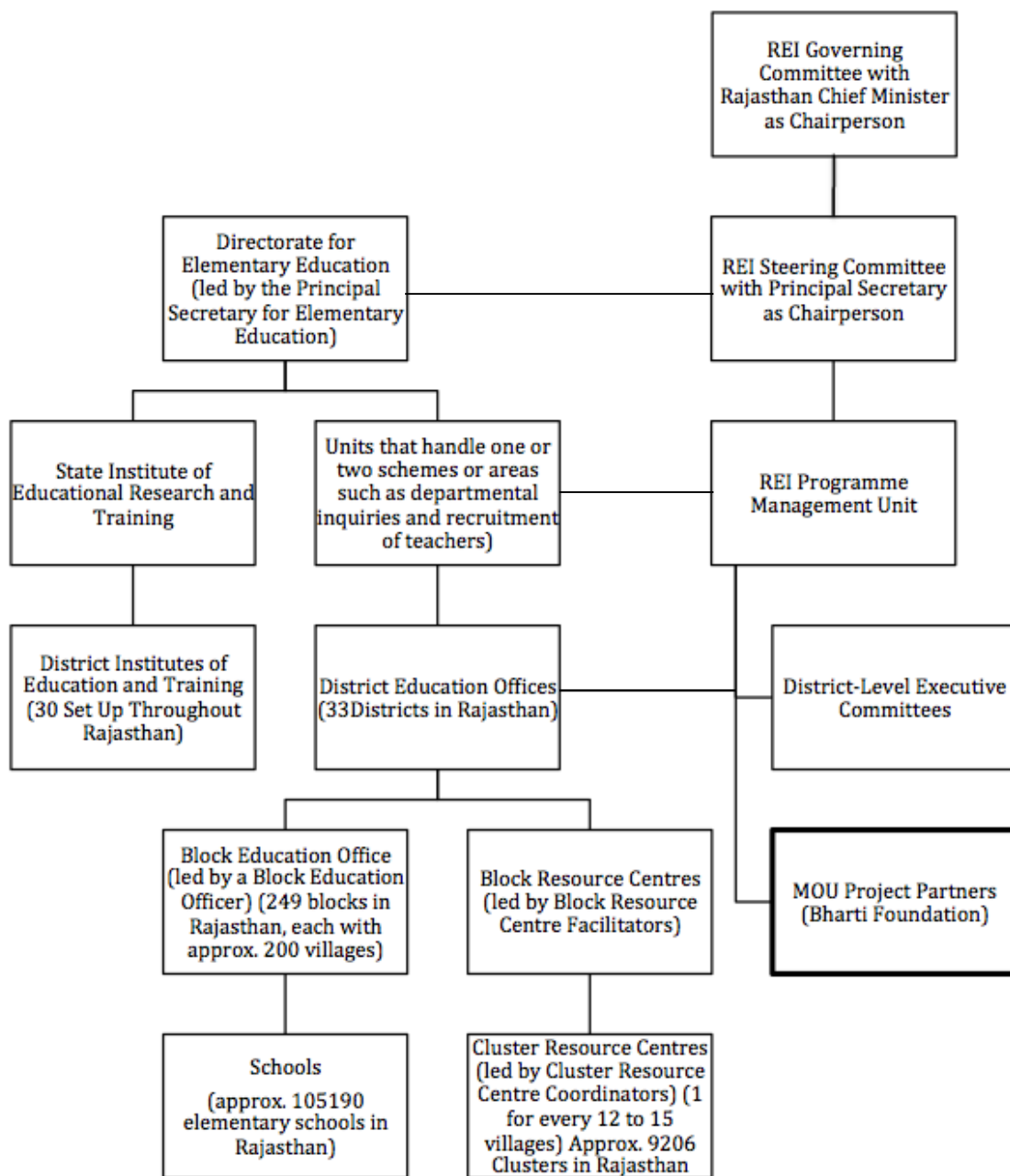


Figure 3: Basic governance frameworks of the Rajasthan State elementary education system and the REI structure, 2012-13

Sources: (Pachauri, 2012; Rajasthan Finance Controllers of State Implementation Societes, 2013; Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009)

Additionally, Foundation staff professed that in SBS adopted schools, “we need to comply with certain government requirements” through “submitting reports” (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012b). When asked to provide examples of what kinds of reports they submit, most examples only pertained to the government-funded schemes in those schools (e.g., free textbooks and mid-day meal grains) (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). Interestingly, field staff complained that this doubled SBS head teachers’ reporting workload, as reporting requirements between the government and the Foundation were different. Field staff said no efforts had been made on behalf of the Foundation or government to make these reporting requirements more similar. However, some Foundation staff claimed that SBS schools were reporting only minimally to the government: “we are reporting to [the] government nothing... one extra register [for mid-day meal] is being made and that’s all”, and claimed that government officials could use the publicly available Foundation annual reports to find any other information they required (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a).

In accordance with the RTE, another layer of local governance in SBS adopted schools should exist in the form of school management committees (SMCs). Since the 1980s, various policy frameworks have encouraged the development of community-based school governance (e.g. National Education Policies of 1986 and 1992), a practice that was legally mandated for all elementary schools but private unaided schools through the RTE (Government of India, 2009, sec. 21), and consequently, Rajasthan’s RTE rules (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 11. 3.). According to the RTE Act, the functions of the SMC are to “monitor the working of the school; prepare and recommend [a] school development plan; monitor the utilisation of the grants received from [the government] and perform such other functions as may be prescribed” (Government of India, 2009, sec. 2. a–d). Membership of the SMC must consist of members of the *gram panchayat*, or local village-level government authority, teachers, and parents of the school children. Parents should constitute about 75% of membership, with priority given to those from economically weaker backgrounds (Government of India, 2009, sec. 21.1).

According to Foundation headquarters interviewees, every SBS adopted school had an SMC (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a, 2012e). However this study uncovered no mention of SMCs or similar bodies in Foundation publications, operational literature (including the School Operating Manual), or in the MOU. According to head teachers at

visited adopted schools, the SMCs met once every three months, and their roles were related to the purchase of supplies (e.g., bookcases, mirrors, etc.), monitoring the mid-day meal, and monitoring the execution of government grants. One head teacher described SMC meetings thusly: “[it] is the time where we discuss [whether] we need a table, or some chairs...and community will [provide] it” (Interview with SBS head teacher, 2012c). When a Foundation field staff member was asked if SMCs ever discuss other issues, such as classroom practices, the response was “No, no, no...they only monitor the infrastructure” (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012b). One senior staff member asserted: “since we have taken [the schools] from [the] government, we get...[little] assistance from [SMCs]...we know how to take decisions and the teachers are our teachers” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a).

6.2.2 Curriculum and pedagogy

The Foundation contrasted its SBS curriculum and pedagogy to traditional didactic and rote learning methods employed in many rural government schools through emphasizing child-centric, activity-based learning. In the early days of the SBS program, the Foundation described the aim of its curriculum thusly:

...Our mandate was to create a synergy between the state’s curriculum and our expectations of implementing a consciously crafted Bharti Curriculum...Thus the Bharti Curriculum is an amalgamation of thoughts and ideas and is a well-crafted methodology that is based on minimum learning levels and addresses all domains appropriate to the developmental level of the child. The curriculum thus created ensures that students not only gain knowledge in contextual settings but also develop skills to become global citizens of the 21st century (BF, 2009a, p. 11).

As part of the curriculum development, the Bharti Foundation ostensibly undertook several mapping exercises to ensure that SBS curricula corresponded with state-level curricula in the states in which it operated to facilitate the mainstreaming of students into non-SBS secondary schools (BF, 2006). The Foundation claimed that in line with its MOU with Rajasthan, the only key difference between the SBS adopted schools and Greenfield curricula was the use of free government textbooks in the former (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g).

At the time of field research, the Foundation championed the SBS curriculum as “an amalgamation of best practices in the field of education, [with] elements that have been tried and tested in different contexts and...key learnings [*sic*] from operating in over 250 rural schools in

six states of the country” (BF, 2012a, p. 24). The Foundation described its “activity-based” curriculum as follows:

Focusing on questioning and exploration as one of the key tools of the academic process, the curriculum is a unique amalgamation of innovation and expertise. Moving away from the conventional methods of teaching, the curriculum encourages children to explore, question, reason and construct knowledge on their own (BF, 2008c, p. 1).

The Foundation acknowledged that the SBS curriculum partially borrowed from the *National Curriculum Framework 2005* (NCF), the most recent national framework produced by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (BF, 2011b). The main thrust of the NCF 2005 in comparison to earlier national curriculum frameworks is its conceptualization of learning as an active, child-centric process that should be tied to the local identity and realities of the child (NCERT, 2005). The NCF has become mandatory (Government of India, 2009) since the passing of the RTE. Until then, it was meant to be advisory in nature, though funds were provided by the central government to states to promote the framework in their school systems. The RTE similarly emphasizes that learning must be child-centred and take place through “activities, discovery and exploration” (Government of India, 2009), and focus on the “all-round development of the child” (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 29.2(b)).¹⁶

In addition, the Foundation professed to using the “continuous comprehensive evaluation” (CCE) methodology (BF, 2014a, p. 26), rather than more outcomes-focused student evaluation methods. The Central Board of Secondary Education (2015), one of the federal boards of education in India, explains that CCE seeks to replace year end examinations “by identifying [a student’s] learning performance at regular time intervals right from the beginning of the academic session and employing suitable remedial measures for enhancing their learning performance” (Central Board of Secondary Education, 2015, website). One of its intentions is to support mastery of concepts rather than memorization and rote learning (Central Board of Secondary Education, 2015, website). While the NCF 2005 recommended the CCE approach, the RTE Act makes it mandatory (Government of India, 2009b, Section 29(2)h).

¹⁶ The RTE Act also mandates that a new curriculum framework must be developed (Government of India, 2009), though this has yet to come to fruition.

In line with this constructivist philosophy, the Foundation website claims that “more than 50% of the curriculum followed at [SBS] schools is on projects and activities that help children learn through self-exploration and discovery rather than rote-learning” (BF, 2015d, website). This curriculum is also meant to impart what the Foundation terms “co-scholastic skills”, such as the development of personal, social, physical and emotional skills of children through teaching teamwork, critical thinking, lateral thinking and problem solving (BF, 2014a, p. 16). As part of CCE, SBS students are ostensibly graded each term as per defined rubrics on both academic and “holistic” development (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g), though this could not be independently verified. Additionally, four head teachers interviewed claimed to hold parent-teacher meetings on student progress monthly, and two claimed that parent-teacher meetings were held bi-monthly.

In its publications, the Foundation draws particular attention to the TLMs that SBS teachers are required to employ to facilitate activity-based learning, including games, pictures, puzzles and other visual and play-based materials that are intended to help children “discover” literacy, numeracy and other skills. They are either meant to be procured by the Foundation and distributed to schools, or created by teachers and children. Examples cited by interviewees included masks, wall-hangings, flashcards, and colourful maps and charts which are intended to make lessons more activity-based.¹⁷ At planned-visit schools, colourful TLMs were readily found in classroom corners and walls. However, there were far fewer TLMs on walls at unannounced visit schools as compared to planned-visit schools. One head teacher at an unannounced visit school also took me to one empty classroom which he termed the ‘resource room’, in which some of the learning materials sent by the Foundation were locked away in a cupboard, some still in their packaging. These were championed as tools of activity-based learning in program publications (e.g., ‘Jolly Phonics’ books supplied by Absolute Return for Kids [ARK]) (BF, 2014a)

In line with the Foundation’s emphasis on enhancing the “economic relevance” of schooling, Foundation publications also mentioned computers as what set the SBS schools apart (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f), professing that computers are aids which “fortify the school curriculum with tools that will help develop 21st century skills in children” (BF, 2011b, p.

¹⁷ Some of these TLMs have been incorporated from other non-state actors working in the field of education, including: learning software (Azim Premji Foundation and Pratham); educational books (Eklyavya, National book trust, Panchatantra, and others); and worksheets (Freelance consultants).

26). The importance of computers to differentiating Foundation schools from other schools was echoed at the ground level by head teachers. Each school was meant to be equipped with one or two “Kidsmart Computers” provided by IBM. This type of computer gains its name from its brightly coloured appearance and educational software in math, science and language designed to help children “discover and/or learn while they explore” (IBM Kidsmart, 2012, p. 14). Some class time was supposed to be devoted to “computer-aided learning” and “enhancing students’ computer skills” (BF, 2012a, p. 25) by having groups of children interact with the Kidsmart Computer(s). However, no computers were being used during visits. When asked to see Kidsmart Computer in action, only two schools were able to turn their Kidsmart Computers on due to electricity shortages. Additionally, at one unannounced visit school, there was no Kidsmart Computer. School staff explained it had been stolen over a year back and had not been replaced.

Also as part of their effort to distinguish SBS schools as more economically “relevant”, Foundation publications emphasize how a greater focus on English sets the curriculum of SBS schools apart from government schools (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f). This was echoed by head teachers interviewed for this study (Interview with SBS head teacher, 2012c). According to the Foundation, “refinement of linguistic skills in English are a must for a child to create her successful future” (BF, 2014a, p. 14). However, other than a “focus” on learning English, the medium of instruction in SBS schools was not detailed in the operating manual, annual reports, or website.

Given the way English is emphasized in Foundation publications, it is unsurprising that some media reports describe schools as “English medium” (International Business Times Online, 2010). In fact, the medium of instruction in Rajasthan’s Greenfield and adopted SBS schools visited for this study was Hindi, and English was integrated as a course (BF, 2013).¹⁸ This is consistent with and no different from the Rajasthan government school policy on English language instruction, which was modified in 2012 to introduce English as a subject in Class I (NCERT, 2012). Although SBS head teachers could often speak in English, the level of fluency was not high, and in three observed English classes, lessons had numerous spelling and grammatical errors. While the perceived quality of teaching amongst parents and community members was not assessed for this study, one head teacher indicated that parents were concerned:

¹⁸ SBS curricula are also available in Punjabi, Tamil and Bengali for Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, respectively, other states of operation (BF, 2013).

“...they [parents] are saying that the students...aren't learning English fast enough... we are not teaching English properly” (Interview with SBS head teacher, 2012a). Three head teachers further highlighted English teaching as a major concern for parents, brought up during parent-teacher meetings.

6.2.3 Teacher hiring and training

SBS teachers were meant to be young men and women recruited from surrounding villages or the village in which the school was located. Bharti Foundation publications state that teachers are qualified at the time of recruitment (BF, 2013), and claim that they are selected through recruitment drives which test both subject knowledge and personal suitability (BF, 2014a).¹⁹ According to Foundation publications, new teachers are given seven days of induction training, followed by eight to 10 days per year of skill-specific sessions (e.g., in subjects or ICT), needs-based training, and refresher training (BF, 2012a). The Foundation stated that teachers are trained to use “innovative teaching methodology which will deliver child-friendly education that empowers students to explore, question and connect with their surroundings” (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f). The Foundation also claims that in-class training is provided by cluster coordinators when they visit to observe schools (BF, 2012a). However, this was refuted by one Foundation interviewee, who insisted that pedagogical support was not provided by cluster coordinators, but only by teacher trainers. This interviewee clarified: “there is one [SBS] trainer in each district and some districts don't even have [SBS] trainers, like UP, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu...they don't have [SBS] trainers ” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g). At the time of field research, this would work out to roughly one SBS teacher trainer for every 20 or more schools in Rajasthan.

The Foundation also adopted the practice of “volunteer teachers” early on, which it describes as recruiting unqualified teachers with a “passion for teaching” (BF, 2014c). They were expected to “lear[n] on the job” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d), and were ostensibly assigned to conduct extra-curricular activities, physical education, and substitute for classroom teachers when absent (BF, 2014c), or “cater to weaker students in the cluster” (BF, 2014c).

¹⁹ In most states, including Rajasthan, minimum qualifications include senior secondary school completion plus a two-year diploma or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree (A. Goyal, Singh, Pj, & Gupta, 2014; National Council for Teacher Education, 2010, sec. 3)

In SBS adopted government schools, existing qualified teachers were removed and replaced with lower-salaried, contract teachers paid by the Foundation. Although highly controversial, the strategy to replace teachers was in line with the Foundation's MOU with the Government of Rajasthan: "[The] School Education Department will transfer all the existing staff and teachers out of the schools adopted by BF. They may be redeployed in other schools by the School Education Department" (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 5.4). An in-depth discussion on this approach is included in Section 7.1.1.

Teachers and para-teachers were assigned to schools according to the school's need, and could be fired. As shown in Table 11 below, at the five schools visited for this study, there was an average teacher-student ratio of one teacher for every 28 students, on par with DISE data for the schools, though slightly above the DISE average for Rajasthan at 1:26 (DISE, 2013a).

| Indicator | Study questionnaire data (fall 2012) | DISE data (fall 2012) |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Average # of teachers | 6 | 6 |
| Average teacher/pupil ratio | 1:28 | 1:27 |
| % of teachers with necessary qualifications | 100% | 97% |

Table 11: Key teacher data for SBS schools visited

Source: Study administered questionnaire and DISE School Report Cards for 2012 (DISE, 2013a)

Note: In an effort to maintain anonymity of schools, averages have been provided. One school was unable to provide data due to time constraints. Teacher qualifications were not cross-checked by the researcher.

The SBS approach resulted in issues related to qualified teacher retention, and consequently, shortages of qualified teachers in planned and unannounced visit schools. Despite the fact that all head teacher interviewees claimed their teachers were fully qualified, two teachers encountered during observations did not have professional teaching qualifications, though they did have undergraduate degrees. Both of these teachers taught at unannounced visit schools. At one unannounced visit school, two teachers had recently left for government school positions, where salaries are higher and positions are more secure. At the second unannounced visit school, there was a very clear teaching shortage. The head teacher was responsible for monitoring two classrooms full of children, while another teacher was responsible for a third. In fact, one Foundation staff member stated that since the RTE came into effect and hiring in government schools increased (or was due to increase), more SBS teachers were pursuing this option:

...even our existing teachers said, ‘We have to prepare for our [government teacher] exam’. The competition is tough... there was one particular time when I think 90% of our teachers who applied got through...so then we realized, ‘Oh my God, we’ve become a training machine.’ There was a time when I was saying...‘Let’s only hire teachers [aged] 45 and up because they can’t apply to those [positions]’, you know? (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

In addition to attrition issues, many Foundation staff admitted that SBS teachers would require much more training and support to deliver the activity-based, child centric and holistic curricula the Foundation hoped to implement. This was generally attributed to a low perception of teaching quality by Foundation staff. However, most felt that “intensive training” would help to fix the problem:

The quality of teachers we get are...not that high class. You know, they’re rural ladies and gentleman...it takes us great pains to train them...For them to grasp what’s expected of them. I mean we’re still in the stage of getting these teachers to grasp what our expectations are of them now [six years into the program] (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f).

In-depth data on teaching quality were outside the scope of this study. However, among the classes observed at all planned and unannounced visit schools, teachers were the primary facilitators at the front of the class. At two of the planned-visit schools, teachers gave demonstrations of what they termed to be, “activity-based learning”, by incorporating masks, puppets and other props into lessons (Observation field notes, 2012d). However, at all schools, individual children were not given specific attention, and sat facing the teacher. Sitting in on a math class, rote learning was observed as students largely repeated figures and numbers written on the chalkboard in unison. Some minor student engagement strategies were employed, e.g., teachers prompting students to raise their hands if they thought the equation was correct. In one environmental studies class, the teacher led students in a fill-in-the-blank exercise in a SBS textbook (Observation field notes, 2012a). One unannounced-visit school was overflowing with children. Dozens of children were sitting in the courtyard or on school grounds, not engaged in any teaching-learning activity. When asked what these children were doing, some school staff replied that they were engaging in “outdoor” lessons (Observation field notes, 2012a). However, no teaching-learning activities for these groups were observed.

6.3 SBS quality inputs

6.3.1 'Free' education

In line with the Foundation's objective to provide a model that addressed the "challenges and constraints" of schooling in rural India (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e), the target demographic for SBS schools were rural children from historically socio-economically disadvantaged groups including children belonging to SC, ST, and OBC groups as well as girl children and children from poor families (BF, 2015a). Procedures on registration and admission for the schools instructed SBS staff to privilege students from these backgrounds in both Greenfield and adopted schools (Field notes of internal documents, 2012).

According to Foundation staff members, the locations of SBS Greenfield schools in Rajasthan were determined through a needs-assessment survey in which the Foundation identified rural areas, which according to one field staff member, offered no "quality" option for schooling within six or seven kilometers (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c). The Foundation would then approach the *gram panchayat* to donate or lease community land for the construction of an SBS Greenfield school (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c).

To attract its target demographic, all SBS Greenfield and adopted schools are meant to be free of fees, and supply uniforms, supplies (including textbooks, notebooks, writing utensils, and other equipment), and mid-day meals. All head teachers visited for this study asserted that their schools charged no fees, and the preparation of the mid-day meal was observed at all schools. Additionally, all SBS schools are meant to provide one year of pre-primary education (Kainth, 2012). All head teacher interviewees attested that their schools had a pre-primary class, and a pre-primary class was observed in three of the schools visited.²⁰

Table 12 below provides an overview of key data on students from disadvantaged groups in SBS Greenfield and adopted schools visited in this study. Head teachers claimed that all students in their schools were from low-income backgrounds, and large proportions were from historically marginalized groups.

²⁰ As three of the schools visited were run in a double-shift format, the pre-primary class could have been held when I was not present.

| Indicator | Study questionnaire data (fall 2012) | DISE data (Submitted fall 2012) |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| # of SBS schools with data | 5 | |
| Level and # of classes | Pre-Primary to Class V (4 schools, 6 classes each) Pre-Primary to Class VI (1 school, 7 classes) | |
| Average enrolment | 183 | 151 |
| Average % of girls' enrolment | 49% | 51% |
| Average % enrolment from SC groups | 30% | 13% |
| Average % enrolment from ST groups | 1% | 0% |
| Average % enrolment from OBC groups | 43% | 21% |
| Average % enrolment from low-income groups | 100% | N/A |

Table 12: Key enrolment data for SBS schools visited (fall 2012)

Source: Study administered questionnaire and DISE School Report Cards for 2012 (DISE, 2013b)

Note: In an effort to maintain anonymity of schools, averages have been provided. One school was unable to provide data due to time constraints.

However, these data could not be independently verified by household- or student-level data collection, as it was outside the scope of this study. In an effort to have some comparative measure, data provided for this study were cross-checked with official data submitted to DISE for the same period, where available.²¹ It is important to note that DISE data are official data provided by schools. There may be incentives to report data in line with procedural obligations under various policy frameworks, such as the Adopted Schools MOU or the RTE rules.

Although data could not be independently verified in this study, there was a rather large discrepancy in the proportion of students from certain disadvantaged groups (i.e., STs, SCs, OBCs) reported by schools as compared to DISE data. This proportion was almost 50% lower in DISE data than in the data provided by head teachers for this study. Conversely, data provided by schools on girls' enrolment is largely consistent with DISE data (DISE, 2013a). The root of the discrepancy in these data sets is unknown. However, it reinforces the importance of controlling for socio-economic background variables in any assessments of student achievement (see Section 6.4 for discussion of internal assessments), and highlights the need for more rigorous data collection in future studies.

²¹ Data from DISE School Report Cards was used. These report cards are part of an initiative launched in 2013 in partnership with the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). District-level data are collected on over 1 million primary schools across India. Schools are assigned a mark out of 10. According to the DISE website, for 10% of schools data must be double-checked for accuracy by state officials (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2014). DISE data are official data provided by schools, and there may be incentives to report data in line with procedural obligations under various policy frameworks, such as the Adopted Schools MOU or the RTE rules.

6.3.2 School infrastructure

School infrastructure was often cited by head teachers as a quality difference between SBS schools (both Greenfield and adopted) and surrounding alternatives. Both models are meant to be designed with separate toilets for girls and boys (to encourage girls' enrolment and retention), provision of water, electricity and playground equipment, and with a small section for a library. In adopted government schools this meant upgrading certain facilities. These elements are further mandated under the RTE (Government of India, 2009), but are often absent or insufficient in government schools in remote locations in Rajasthan (S. Goyal, 2007). All schools visited for this study had separate toilets for boys and girls and a small section for a library. However electricity was not working in two of the schools visited (one planned and one unannounced), and water was not running in one unannounced-visit school (Observation field notes, 2012a).

The number of classrooms and the presence of a playground were the only obvious differences between SBS Greenfield and adopted schools found in this study. SBS adopted schools each had five classrooms, and lacked a playground. Conversely, while all visited Greenfield schools had playgrounds, three of the four of them only had three classrooms as opposed to the five they were supposed to have (explained below). These three visited schools were run in a double shift system, in which students were taught in a morning or afternoon shift. This allowed three classrooms to be re-used for six classes (pre-primary to Class 5), and greatly cut down infrastructure costs. According to Foundation publications, this approach is used in some Greenfield schools (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f), though an exact proportion was not verified. This practice is not unusual in private schools in India, although it raises concerns as it often results in reduced instructional hours (Aggarwal, 2007). The SBS program claims to compensate for any instructional hours lost and combat drop-outs by having a shorter summer holiday (BF, 2014b).

Shift schools are a “grey area” under the RTE and Rajasthan RTE rules. Technically, these schools had a shortage of one or more classrooms according to the RTE and Rajasthan's RTE infrastructure norms, which mandate one classroom for every teacher.²² However according

²² The RTE Act specifies that there must be one classroom for every teacher, and one teacher for every class (5 classes in primary schools and 6 in upper-primary schools) (Government of India, 2009). The Rajasthan RTE Rules specify that requirements for schools in Rajasthan will be in accordance with the RTE Act's specifications (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 5. b)).

to data provided by head teachers in school questionnaires, classroom-student ratios were approximately one teacher to 26 students in shift schools (see Table 13 below), in line with numbers stipulated in the RTE Act and Rajasthan rules.²³

| Indicator | Study questionnaire data (fall 2012) | DISE data (fall 2012) |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| # of SBS schools* | 5 | |
| Level and # of classes | Pre-Primary to Class V (4 schools, 6 classes each) Pre-Primary to Class VI (1 school, 7 classes) | |
| # of schools run in shifts | 3 | |
| Average # of classrooms | 5 | 3.8 |
| Average classroom/student ratio in single-shift schools | 1:30 | 1:44 |
| Classroom/student ratio in double-shift schools** | 1:26 | Not available** |

Table 13: Key infrastructure data for SBS schools visited

Source: Study administered questionnaire and DISE School Report Cards for 2012 (DISE, 2013b)

Notes: *: In an effort to maintain anonymity of schools, averages have been provided. One school was unable to provide data due to time constraints.

** : DISE data indicate that all SBS schools visited were not shift schools. This was not the case in practice for three schools visited.

This was roughly consistent with the number of children observed in classrooms during visits for this study (on average 31 students per classroom). However, DISE data report the number as much higher (1:44) (DISE, 2013a). This is likely because DISE reports that all schools visited for this study were non-shift schools, contrary to my observations, thus distributing all students amongst three classrooms in shift schools. While the origins of this discrepancy were not confirmed, they could be linked to RTE compliance issues in the SBS program (discussed further in Section 7.3.1).

SBS schools are also meant to follow an infrastructure design principle called, “BALA” (buildings as learning aids), involving the incorporation of various learning aids in the building (BF, 2007). For example, under this principle, window grills may be equipped with abacuses, and walls are painted with height charts, fractions and maps, intended to create what the Foundation calls a “joyful learning experience” (BF, 2011b, p. 26). All of the schools visited incorporated BALA design principles, with chalkboards on the walls, abacuses in the windows, and other aids.

²³ The RTE Act specifies that schools between 150-200 students must have five teachers plus a head teacher, and that schools with more than 200 students cannot exceed a pupil-teacher ratio of 40 (Government of India, 2009). The Rajasthan RTE Rules specify that requirements for schools in Rajasthan will be in accordance with the RTE Act’s specifications (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 5. b)).

In addition to incorporating BALA design principles, another key visual feature of SBS Greenfield and adopted schools in this study was that the SBS name was prevalent on school buildings (Observation field notes, 2012d). Thus, branding was prevalent. Indeed, community members encountered in informal interactions during fieldwork connected the Foundation to its parent company. For example, when seeking directions for remote schools during field visits, some village inhabitants directed me to “Airtel schools” (referring to the Foundation’s parent company, Bharti Airtel) (Observation field notes, 2012a).

6.4 SBS quality outcomes: Learning levels and ‘holistic development’

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, the key sources of empirical evidence the Foundation drew from the demonstrate better quality than available schooling alternatives for SBS students were higher learning levels, and what they termed “holistic development” of students, at the same cost as government schools. Internally-produced reports assert that the Foundation has had success in increasing school enrolment, literacy, numeracy, and language scores of children over time (BF, 2015b, website). However, little information is provided on how the Foundation’s assessments were conducted (i.e., what parameters were used), including whether they controlled for socio-economic status of students. Numerous studies on education quality have demonstrated that without doing so, it is not possible to ascertain whether differences in greater household income or caste background of school attendees account for higher learning levels (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001; Walker et al., 2007; Zhang, 2006).

By the time of field research, the Foundation had also had two external audits conducted on the functioning of its program, one by Indus Learning Solutions (funded by the World Bank) in 2010-2011, and another by Educational Initiatives (an Indian consulting company based in Mumbai) in 2011-2012. The Foundation made selective information on learning levels from these external assessments available through its annual reports (see Table 14 below). Both assessments ostensibly found that the majority of students scored above 65% in core subjects.

| Subject | English | Language | Maths | Environmental studies |
|---|---------|----------|-------|-----------------------|
| % of students earning less than 40% mark | 12 | 8 | 16 | 21 |
| % of students earning between 40-60% mark | 27 | 23 | 25 | 30 |
| % of students earning between 60-80% mark | 34 | 39 | 36 | 37 |
| % of students earning greater than 80% mark | 27 | 31 | 23 | 12 |

Table 14: Student learning levels in SBS schools as measured by Educational Initiatives external assessment (2011-2012)

Source: (BF, 2012a)

However, similarly to internally-produced reports, it is unclear whether socio-economic backgrounds were controlled for. This severely limits the robustness of the findings. According to the Foundation, these external audits “assessed learning levels based on teaching methodology” (BF, 2011b, p. 28), but no further elaboration is provided. Neither of these assessments were publicly available, nor were they made available for this study when requested. Thus, concrete evidence outside the Foundation’s self-reporting could not be obtained, and internal evaluations could not be cross-checked.

To support its claim to fostering the “holistic development” of students, the Foundation provides internal data on its website claiming to corroborate the program’s positive impact in this regard. In 2014, the Foundation commissioned a “social impact assessment” of the SBS program by EY (2014) of 300 SBS and 180 non-SBS children and their parents, which is publicly available on the Foundation’s website. It was based on a questionnaire conducted with SBS students and their families, as well as students and families accessing public or private school alternatives that fell “just outside” SBS school catchment areas (EY, 2014, p. 13). It found that SBS students “display higher confidence levels, have a greater sensitivity to the environment, practice better hygiene and are firmly entrenched in a strong value system vis-à-vis children from other private and government schools in the vicinity” (EY, 2014, p. 13). However, similar to other SBS assessments, this study did not control for socio-economic factors, leading to fallacies in some of the study’s conclusions. For example, the study makes the following conclusion:

The [SBS] program's impact can be understood when one factors in the fact that while 58 percent of the households from where children are studying at Satya Bharti Schools reported having a functional toilet at home, the corresponding figure for households from where children study at other schools is slightly lower and stands at 47.2 percent. This difference highlights the fact that the presence of proper sanitation infrastructure at schools has the capacity to translate into children's demand for such facilities at home (EY, 2014, p. 26).

This conclusion does not consider the possibility that children attending SBS schools already had functional toilets at home due to potential factors such as higher socioeconomic status of students as compared to other schools. Additionally, while this outcome could hypothetically be linked to hygiene-related lessons in SBS schools, there is no indication in Foundation publications that students were encouraged to campaign for toilets in their homes. Rather EY simply bases this conclusion on the "presence of proper sanitation facilities" (EY, 2014, p. 26) in SBS schools.

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, the Foundation's key strategy for building empirical credibility for its "managerial expertise" claim was its ability to deliver these "better" outcomes at roughly the same cost as government schools in Rajasthan. At the time of field research, the Foundation placed its annual SBS student cost at approximately Rs. 8000 annually (BF, 2011b), slightly above per-child government expenditure at Rs. 7900 annually (Accountability Initiative and Azim Premji Foundation, 2011). However, this assessment must be interpreted with a high degree of caution. The Foundation did not provide information on how these costs were calculated. Additionally, a large part of the comparative cost is omitted from the Foundation's calculation in the form of land and infrastructure. For example, SBS Greenfield schools were shift schools with fewer classrooms than many government schools (see Section 6.3.2). Additionally, land was donated by communities in many of these schools, which is not the case for government schools. In SBS adopted schools, school buildings were handed over to the Foundation by the government, therefore greatly reducing comparative infrastructure costs that the government already incurred. Furthermore, the Foundation revealed that costs in their SBS Greenfield and adopted schools are covered by communities, a practice discussed further in Section 7.1.1.

Additionally, interviews revealed that certain interventions could be too costly if scaled to the government system. One official pointed out that the SBS's structure of ground-level monitoring would be very difficult to incorporate into the government's administrative structure.

The rough government equivalent to SBS cluster coordinators are Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators, who would have double, or in most cases triple, the amount of schools to monitor in the areas where the Bharti Foundation operated (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f).²⁴ Bringing this number down to the SBS standard (7-8) would certainly require considerable resources over the per-child cost of government systems.

6.5 Discussion

The Foundation asserted that its value added to the education sector was its ability to bring heightened economic relevance and managerial expertise to schooling through a unique and replicable school quality model. However, as demonstrated in the findings above, it is unclear whether these assertions were reflected in the ground realities of the SBS program owing to the lack of appropriate data. First, the Foundation provided no non-partisan evidence to corroborate its claims. This reflects Desai and Kharas's (2008) assertion that "self-evaluations of NGOs are overwhelmingly positive, but these are rarely conducted according to accepted standards of reliable evaluation" (p. 161). Second, inputs and processes framed as increasing the "economic relevance" of education, such as the integration of English and ICTs, were found to be of limited application and quality in visited schools. However, these visits were not representative of the program due to the small sample size. Additionally, the Foundation's claim to managerial expertise in providing comparatively "better quality" education at the same cost as government schools was challenged by the Foundations own assertions related to program costs and cost recovery.

Yet more importantly, the Foundation's own experience showed that it would need to increase resources in education-focused investment choices, such as increasing teacher trainers and hiring more qualified staff, to make a compelling case of better quality over the government sector. For example, Foundation staff raised quality concerns about the SBS approach to hiring and training low-salaried, local contract teachers, including qualified teacher attrition and their struggle to deliver "innovative" child-centric pedagogy. These are not challenges unique to the Foundation. Indeed, a significant body of research has shown that low salaries and insecure contracts can foster low motivation and teacher attrition (Chudgar, Chandra, & Razzaque, 2014;

²⁴ Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators in the state system are officials responsible for clusters of villages in the Indian administrative system, not clusters of schools as with the SBS program. See Figure 3 for further information.

Chudgar, 2013; Govinda & Josephine, 2004; Pandey, 2006). Many studies find that child-centric and activity-based approaches promoted by the central government also do not translate to practice in government schools, where qualified teachers still largely employ traditional didactic models and rote methods (Bharti & Bhattacharya, 2015; De et al., 2011).

As Srivastava (2010a) states in her refutation of the scarce resources claim, “financing and providing education publicly and/or privately is about the social and economic investment choices of international players and national governments” (p. 525). By claiming to stay within the same per-child cost as governments, the Foundation could more overtly demonstrate its expertise in cost efficiency vis-à-vis the state and avoid the controversial suggestion that the government must increase its education spending. Indeed, in a recent media interview, the CEO of the Foundation claimed that the Bharti Group of Companies is likely not yet spending its 2% of average net profits as required by India’s *Companies Act, 2013* causing him to ask, “when those funds come [to the Foundation], how will we utilize them?” (Live Mint Online, 2015).

Furthermore, it has been noted throughout this chapter that many elements of this quality model are already common practice in India. Indeed, one could question the uniqueness, or “innovativeness” of the Foundation’s model over other alternatives. For example mid-day meal programs have been found to be key in attracting and maintaining students from poorer households in India, as well as promoting their cognitive achievement (Afridi, 2010; Kingdon & Drèze, 2001). The Indian central government has a large mid-day meal scheme which provides free meals in primary and upper-primary schools, and is estimated to have benefited approximately 104 million children in 2013-2014 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2015a). Furthermore, inputs such as free tuition, school supplies, and pre-primary school are meant to be provided at government schools, and have been found to be particularly important in India in enhancing the likelihood that parents will enrol their girl children, who lose out more often than boys from cost-benefit considerations of schooling in poor households (Ramachandran, 2003; Sharkey, 2009).

Additionally, using para-teachers, or low-salaried unqualified contract teachers, although controversial, is not unique to the Foundation. It has been popular amongst low-fee private schools (Pachauri, 2012) and has also been instituted by certain state governments in India. Rajasthan was a particular champion of the para-teacher strategy through its *Shiksha Karmi*

initiative, in which the state partnered with over 2600 villages to appoint local, unqualified teachers to specific schools on fixed-term, renewable contracts (Ramachandran & Sethi, 2000). However, since the passing of the RTE, unqualified teachers are no longer permitted, which further problematizes the applicability of the SBS model to wider state systems.

Finally, it is important to note that the Foundation's quality metric of "better than government schools" is problematic. It creates a field of action in which SBS schools have to be only slightly better than poor quality government schools to succeed. Srivastava's (2008) analysis of relative quality applied in her study of LFP schooling in India, can be extended here:

...the LFP sector has to perform only marginally better to be considered 'good' by clients...Since the baseline is set at a low level, and given the average LFP client's inexperience with formal schooling and information asymmetries on what constitutes 'good schooling' it does not follow that the LFP sector is providing an objectively 'good' quality of schooling. As a simple example from the data, an LFP school where teachers were present and required to teach something every day, as opposed to a state school where the requirement was not instilled in practice, was bound to be perceived of higher quality (Srivastava, 2008, p. 22-23).

Indeed, when asked to describe the major improvement in SBS adopted government schools in Rajasthan, one Rajasthan state education official frankly replied, "teachers are actually working in [the SBS adopted] schools" (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b).

Chapter 7: Institutionalizing the SBS Model

This chapter discusses how the Bharti Foundation was successful in operating as a “quality expert” and institutionalizing its particular vision of educational change in the wider institutional framework for education in Rajasthan. It begins by examining the potency of the Foundation’s mobilizing frames, demonstrating how the Foundation used them to legitimize its top-down control in the design and implementation of the SBS program and position itself as an education “quality expert” vis-à-vis other education stakeholders. In doing so, the chapter also highlights key problems with how accountability and partnership were conceptualized and implemented in the SBS program in Rajasthan. Furthermore, in line with Battilana et al.’s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship, this study also found that the Bharti Foundation’s social position, as well as enabling field conditions, were essential in its eventual mediation and alteration of the wider institutional framework for education in Rajasthan. Specifically, the Foundation relied fundamentally on the existence and expansion of state-enabled “regulatory conditions” which invited new ideas in the form of public-private partnership platforms, as well as the Foundation’s unique position at the intersection of the diverse institutional fields of philanthropy, education and business.

7.1 Frames in action: Operating as a “quality expert” in Rajasthan

As Tikly and Barret (2011) assert, “discourses can have their own constitutive effects on what can and cannot be said, who can speak and with what authority, and how our understanding of concepts such as education and development are shaped” (p. 6). Despite having questionable validity in practice, the Foundation’s frames were nevertheless somewhat successful in legitimizing its role as an “expert” through the SBS Greenfield and Adopted Schools models. Indeed, positioning themselves as uniquely capable of delivering “better” value for money and more “relevant” skills had important constitutive effects on the Foundation’s control and bargaining power in the SBS program’s design and implementation.

7.1.1 Top-down control and uni-directional accountability

This study found that the Foundation was able to use the frames outlined in Chapter 5 to exert a considerable level of control over the institutional frameworks of the SBS Greenfield and adopted schools models. Its approach seemed to result in a form of uni-directional accountability, in which there were few mechanisms to hold the Foundation accountable to key program stakeholders (i.e., governments, teachers and parents), despite mechanisms to hold these stakeholders accountable to the Foundation.

7.1.1.a Public-private partnership or private-public mentorship?

In drawing on its corporate expertise as a guide for its work, the Foundation placed marked importance on having little interference from the government in both the adopted and Greenfield models. This was framed as a key reason behind why the Foundation was primarily operating rather than grant-making: “with the [SBS] program, we undertook an initiative that *necessitated* a self-implementation model that could reach out to thousands of underprivileged children across rural pockets of the country at one go” (Field notes on internal documents, 2012b, emphasis added). The Foundation has asserted that this complete managerial control made it unique amongst foundations in the education sector:

Unlike the majority of foundations, we do not have partners or associates whom we fund to implement projects. We create and run our own schools. Right from the strategy to implementation to administration of the school, everything is done by us. All schools are managed, monitored and funded by Bharti Foundation (Cause Because Online, 2015).

Another Foundation staff member stated “the running of the [SBS adopted government] schools is totally with us...there is no interference from the government, no contribution from anybody else...there is no other foundation which is taking a [*sic*] complete ownership” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b). Other Foundation employees insisted that “they [the government] don’t interfere at all with the learning of the school” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012f). Even a government official affirmed: “[the] government does not have any say in it...[SBS adopted] schools are completely managed and operationalized by Bharti Foundation...[we] do not have any control” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). When asked to describe their role vis-à-vis adopted schools, government interviewees indeed characterized it as *ad-hoc* and more “needs-based”, insisting that “Bharti Foundation

approaches us at state level, also at district level....and then we try to sort out the, uh....problem” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). This is despite the oversight mechanisms outlined in the MOU discussed in Section 6.2.1. However this level of control on the part of the Foundation is reflected in the findings of this study, in which the Foundation was able to virtually transfer its SBS Greenfield program to government schools with very few modifications (see Section 6.1).

The Foundation’s emphasis on control and ownership over its model was so entrenched that it seemed hesitant to share its model with the government. This was enshrined in the Adopted Schools MOU:

...nothing contained in this MOU shall be deemed to grant the Government of Rajasthan and/or the School Education Department any rights ...with respect to any information or inputs provided by Bharti Foundation. Without obtaining prior written consent of the other Party, a Party shall not... use or publicize the intellectual property of the other Party (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 8.1).

This clause became especially important in light of the fact that the Foundation filed a trademark registration for its SBS program in 2012, which it framed as a “key milestone” in its activities (Field notes on internal documents, 2012d, p. 13). Such measures to protect the Bharti Foundation’s inputs and innovations could inhibit the sharing of the model with other actors, and particularly the state. Thus, it may be that as a corporate foundation, the Bharti Foundation’s objectives were in tension — i.e., offering the SBS model as a replicable example of “quality education” for the state, while also maintaining ownership over the model in order to promote the Bharti brand. The tendency of the Foundation to stamp the Bharti label on schools further lent credence to the possibility that the SBS program was also partly being used for image-building for the Bharti Group of Companies (see Section 6.3.2).

In line with the Foundation’s strategy of operational control, Foundation interviewees expressed that any level of government control was not conducive. This was best described by Sunil Mittal in an external media interview:

I am happy that state governments want to partner with us...but what takes a long time usually in these partnerships is that we are clear that we don’t want daily interference...We have said no to money because we will not compromise our style of functioning...We are happy to be subjected to massive amounts of transparency...but we can’t run the schools the way they [the government] want to run them (Live Mint, 2011).

Despite the Foundation's claims to "massive amounts of transparency" (Mittal, 2011), the *ad-hoc* relationship described by government interviewees coupled with the weak school-level monitoring frameworks described in Section 6.2.1, raise real accountability concerns about the SBS program, and questions its underlying notion of partnership. Indeed, the Foundation seemed to negotiate the MOU to have nearly complete control over the design and implementation of the model, with little mention of how it would in turn be accountable to the state and other stakeholders (e.g., communities, parents, teachers). Many scholars have noted that the term "partnership" in PPPs, similar to "quality", is employed as a neutral term in policy-making, but is in fact, contingent and contested (Coulson, 2005; K. Kumar, 2012; Srivastava & Oh, 2010). Verger (2012), in particular, notes the tendency of modern PPPs in education to resemble "more a uni-directional mentoring relationship (from public to private)" (p. 123), due to the increasing emphasis on the private partner's managerial expertise vis-à-vis education, that undermines the mutual learning principle...an important policy principle [in] the literature on partnerships" (p. 123).

7.1.1.b Excluding government teachers

Another key juncture in which the Foundation can be seen exercising considerable top-down control is in the removal of government teachers from SBS adopted schools (see Section 6.2.3). The Foundation described this as a very sensitive issue with teachers' unions and government teachers, and remained sensitive regarding its discussions on potential secondary school partnerships with Haryana state (Field notes, 2012b). However, in line with the Foundation's approach of eschewing government control or input, the Foundation seemed to conceptualize government teachers as obstacles to quality, rather than stakeholders or partners.

As one Foundation field staff member stressed regarding teacher pushback: "there were lots of controversies....they [government teachers at schools selected for adoption] made a big resistance when we [were] adopting the project...they [teachers] didn't want to leave the school" (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c). The staff member claimed that the ousted government teachers had spread "many rumours" about the Foundation's motivations in order to rally support against the Foundation, including that the school adoption was part of a larger state move towards the corporate takeover of public schools in which an increasing number of government teachers would lose their jobs (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c). The

same employee shared that government teachers had actually staged protests at SBS adopted schools (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c).

From the existing government teachers' perspective, this resistance was understandable. From the perspective of the Foundation as an institutional entrepreneur, it was "counter[ing] political opposition or 'institutional defenders'" who "benefit from the status quo [and] almost invariably arise to defend existing beliefs and practices" (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 96). This opposition is more likely if the "proposed divergent change threatens established organizational privileges...within the organizational field" (p. 96). In order to coalesce allies and refute opposition, institutional entrepreneurs will thus often "emphasiz[e] the failings of the existing institutionalized practices and norms" (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 80), even if there may be justifiable concerns.

The rationale Foundation employees often provided for replacing government teachers beyond simple cost-cutting, was framed as a behavioural problem with government teachers, or what one staff member called the "mindset in government schools" (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012a). The general attitude amongst Foundation staff was that government teachers were inefficient, unaccountable, and could not be trusted to properly implement the SBS philosophy. Some head teachers felt this problem was due to systemic accountability issues in the government system: "There is nobody to monitor what government teachers are doing. Because [the SBS teacher] is being watched and monitored, he implements what he is told" (Field notes, 2012a). Yet one Foundation field staff member stated that even after replacing teachers in SBS adopted schools, the Foundation had to work to change the "mindset" of their replacements: "our [SBS] teachers...went through that phase also, that government mindset of... 'because we are working in [a] government building...we will work like [the] government' ...so slow ...so we worked to brainwash our teachers" (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c). By brainwashing, this employee was referring to "orientations, support, monitoring and counselling" (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c) which ostensibly made SBS teachers in adopted schools more efficient and accountable.

As mentioned in the context chapter (Section 2.2.1), the issue of teacher absenteeism and a lack of adequate teaching-learning activity in government schools throughout India is well documented (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, & Rogers, 2006; De et al., 2011; S. Kumar, De, Dreze, Samson, & Dasgupta, 2006; Mehrotra, 2006), in rural Rajasthan in particular

(De et al., 2011; Kremer et al., 2005). For example, an in-depth survey of rural government schools in the state in the influential *Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) Revisited*, found that teacher absenteeism was a persistent factor leading to low learning attainment, with over 25% of teachers found absent at the time of the study (De et al., 2011). Additionally, when teachers were present in 276 schools surveyed, almost half were not engaging in any teaching activity (De et al., 2011).

However, more nuanced analyses conclude that these issues are due to systemic problems, including poor incentives, supervision, training and support for government teachers, exacerbated in particularly remote areas where it is hard to incentivize qualified teachers to travel (De et al., 2011; Sharma & Ramachandran, 2009). For example, the *PROBE Revisited* Report found that although government schools have resource centers at the regional and local levels, personnel had “neither the training nor the experience to provide academic supervision or support” (De et al., 2011, p. 36). Additionally, many of these schools also had an absent or non-existent principal, a number of whom failed to take on a sufficient administrative and monitoring role (De et al., 2011).

As Tikly (2011) argues, “engaging the perspectives and experiences of educational professionals in decision-making is particularly important” (p. 14) due to their primary role as “change-agents” in schools. He notes that the exclusion of government teachers is becoming pervasive in education policy-making in the South generally, finding that “key interest groups such as teachers and their organisations have often not been consulted and in some cases have been actively discouraged from participating in the policy making process” (Tikly, 2011, p. 14). Verger (2012) similarly notes that this conceptualization of teachers is drawn on by proponents of PPPs, who perceive the public employment system as “inaccurate due to its lack of incentives and high costs [...] [and] do not aim to reform [it] but to bypass it” (p. 117) by hiring cheap, non-unionized labour. This labour becomes the main source of cost-saving for the private partner and is attractive to government policy-makers looking to save money.

Foundation interviewees would not speak in much detail about the issue due to its sensitivity. In a newspaper interview, Rakesh Mittal simply affirmed that the teacher issue had waned in light of the wide community support for the SBS program: “I think we have overcome it. Now we have people lining up to say ‘can you please open up a school in our village?’” (Money Control, 2010). However the exclusion of government teachers raises serious questions

about how the SBS adopted schools can be expected to sustain the changes after the Bharti Foundation leaves the schools, as well as how the Foundation expects to have a major impact in the wider institutional framework for education despite bypassing such a critical stakeholder in the field, a concern also emphasized by Pachauri (2012) in her study of the SBS adopted school model.

7.1.1.c Community accountability: Stakeholders or shareholders?

Finally, the Foundation's emphasis on its managerial expertise as a guide for its work also leads to an approach to community accountability in SBS Greenfield and adopted schools in which communities are largely rendered accountable to the schools, rather than vice-versa. One senior Foundation staff member provided a fascinating example of how Bharti Group executives exercised top-down authority in the SBS program, describing how the Foundation came to the decision to charge fees in the early days of the program: "So we said let's just charge them [parents] 10 rupees a month...so...they'll be some kind of contribution...so it's not like a free school you can come any time you don't come any time...you know? (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). The SBS fee structure was eventually abolished. One Foundation staff member explained:

So then what happened you know we realized...we're a Bharti Group of Companies you know our standards are very high...so if you give 10 rupees you should get a receipt...Which means, for 80 odd children my teacher would miss one or two period[s] because she has to cut a receipt for every 10 rupees...then, we realized these people are illiterate.... to get this 10 rupees [came at] a cost of process, cost of good governance standards because Bharti Group can never be caught on wrong foot...and then Mr. [Sunil] Mittal said, what are we doing? (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

The fact that the CEO of the Bharti Group of Companies put an end to the fee structure provides an insight into the Group's decision-making abilities vis-à-vis the ground-level implementation of the program. The statement "then, we realized these people are illiterate" demonstrates a potential disconnect between higher organizational structures in the Foundation and the ground realities of its programs. The abandonment of the fee structure because of the fear that the Bharti Group would be "caught on wrong foot" in not giving proper receipts, rather than its poor alignment with the objectives of the program, is further indicative that the Foundation

may have viewed SBS schools as part of a strategy for company image-building. Of course, the eventual elimination of fees could also have been motivated by philanthropic reasons.

Though not a primary focus of the analysis, the study revealed some further insights into how the Foundation conceptualized community accountability. As Tikly (2011) notes, fostering accountability between communities and schools depends on “parents and communities being empowered to interpret the information that they receive in meaningful ways and act on it” (p. 15), which is often not the case in rural areas (Bandyopadhyay, 2011). The data indicated that rather than promoting school-based and other local governance bodies such as SMCs as vehicles for community engagement in the SBS adopted schools model (see Section 6.2.1), the Foundation rather championed community contributions as a method of fostering accountability and ownership:²⁵

[SBS] field co-ordinators are... responsible for identifying resource people at the ground level who can support schools in conducting outdoor project works. They mobilize contributions from villages and all stakeholders. While these contributions take care of a considerable amount of operational costs, it also build[s] in the community a sense of ownership of the school. Community contributions act as a parameter of school effectiveness (BF, 2009a, p. 10).

The SBS Operating manual similarly described the “donation of land for the buildings”, in the case of Greenfield schools, as well as “building boundary walls, entry pathways of the school, and contributing materials like plates, sweaters and monetary donations for school-based events” as examples of community participation and engagement (Field notes on internal documents, 2012f). Some head teachers in this study described instances of community members funding and constructing fences and water pipelines. Importantly, many donations included things that the Foundation should have been responsible for under its model, according to its own publications (e.g., water tanks, stationary, books, clothes) (BF, 2009b).

In this approach, the Foundation drew from contested discourses that position parents as incapable of understanding the value of education unless they pay for it. This is similar to the tendency amongst Indian education policy-makers that Srivastava and Noronha (2014) note of characterizing disadvantaged parents as “uninterested in schooling, unaware of its benefits, and

²⁵ While government and private-aided elementary schools are required to have an SMC under the RTE (Government of India, 2009, sec. 21), and consequently, Rajasthan’s RTE rules (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 11. 3.), private unaided schools are not. Thus, SMCs were only legally mandated in the SBS Adopted (and not Greenfield) model.

un-willing to send their children to school” (p. 52), “rather than question[ing] the institutional structure that inhibits access for schooling for them” (Srivastava & Noronha, 2014, p. 52). They further point to research in India and internationally (e.g., Akaguri, 2011; Fennell, 2013; Srivastava, 2008; Woolman & Fleisch, 2006) which demonstrates that disadvantaged households are “motivated and thoughtful” (Srivastava & Noronha, 2014, p. 2) when making decisions about schooling, but face key institutional and socioeconomic barriers to access.

Other existing channels for community voice and accountability in SBS schools were also seemingly lacking. Though SMCs ostensibly existed in SBS adopted schools, these bodies had little control or input on issues outside of government grants and infrastructure, according to the Foundation (see Section 6.2.1). For example, two head teachers shared that parents had used parent-teacher meetings to raise concerns with the quality of English teaching and the lack of homework given in SBS schools. When asked if and how these concerns were addressed, the answers provided pertained to the need for parents to be “educated” about the SBS approach. One cluster coordinator described the SBS response thusly:

...during the PTM...we are focusing upon educating them [parents] that whatever we are teaching, we are teaching with... the philosophy for the benefit of the child. The most common example we are giving is that if you are going to a doctor you are not questioning whatever the doctor is prescribing (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012c).

While parents may certainly require familiarization with the SBS program’s approach, the attitude that parents are unable to question it because of the Foundation’s expertise, is problematic. Observations of English classes in this study, for example, suggested that parental concerns about the quality of these classes could have been well founded (see Section 6.2.2). In this case, relying on community contributions as a “parameter of school effectiveness” (BF, 2009a, p. 8) is certainly not an effective community feedback mechanism.

The Foundation’s approaches to government partnership and community accountability may have allowed the Foundation to maintain significant control over the program, justified by their comparative “expertise.” The level of control the Foundation, and indeed the Bharti Group of Companies in certain areas (e.g. fees), seemingly exerted in the design and implementation of the SBS program echoes the arguments of many scholars who warn that the stronger emphasis newer philanthropists place on business expertise has led to increasingly “top-down” philanthropy (Ball, 2012a; Edwards, 2009b; Olmedo, 2013; Ramdas, 2011). Their concern is that

this top-down approach can result in poor accountability to key stakeholders such as governments, parents or civil society actors, and their exclusion from substantive discussions on the meaning, purpose and shape of education (Ball, 2008; Olmedo, 2013; Saltman, 2010).

This reflects Edwards's (2011) description of how "new philanthropists" are characterized as able to "get the job done' without fretting too much about whether everyone's voice has been heard in the public policy process" (p. 389). There is some evidence to suggest that this phenomenon was occurring in the context of the SBS program. Greater accountability to and voice from communities, teachers, parents and governments did not seem to fit well with the notion of "managerial efficiency" that the Foundation valued as part of its more controlled model. However, this was not the primary focus of this study, and data on community engagement were gathered from secondary sources. Further focused research on the experiences and engagement of communities in the SBS program would be required for a more comprehensive understanding on this point.

7.1.2 Privileging private partners

In line with this emphasis on its own expertise as a guide for its work, the Foundation also selectively partnered with organizations in the SBS program. The Bharti Foundation has credited over 50 organizations as technical partners in the SBS program, including those who assisted with developing curriculum, software, building design or teacher training modules. When asked how partners were selected, one senior staff member shared: "initially it was... active research because, you see, a school is a large institution and there are so many pieces..." (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). Another staff members elaborated: "now we [the Foundation] lead, implement everything...in-house..." (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g). The same staff member explained: "80% of the teacher training is in-house...we've got a house team of trainers, we devel[op] our [own] modules" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g).

Table 15 provides an overview of the main technical partners in curriculum, training or TLMs for the SBS program between 2009 and 2012. It appears that the Foundation preferred to partner with larger, corporate organizations in the design of the SBS program, including a number of major technology companies, other corporate foundations, freelance consultants from private firms, and some private schools, rather than NGOs including smaller, grassroots or

community organizations. The notable exceptions regarding NGOs were Digantar, a local NGO in Rajasthan, and the major Indian education NGO, Pratham Educational Initiatives, which supplied software for the SBS computer curriculum.

| Type of partner | Partners |
|--|---|
| Private company (17) | Chapters India, Centum Learning Limited, Cogent Communications, IBM India Private Limited, iDiscoveri, Inspire Educational Development Centre, Mad Rat Games, Max Healthcare, Microsoft India Private Limited, MTS India, National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) Education, Pearson Education Limited, Perspective Education, Western Union, Quick Heal, SnG Learning Solutions, Vichaar Value Education |
| Consulting firm/freelance consultants (15) | Fauzia Umar, Gurpreet Kaur, Jodogyan Educational Services, Mukul Consultant I Private Limited, Maheshwari Hindi Officer at Southern Railways, Mukta Saxena, Neelam Yadav, Nishu Verma, Rama Sen Gupta, Seema Patel |
| NGO or research institute (6) | Big Tech Initiative (India), Digantar, Pratham Education Initiatives (India), Room to Read, Susan Thomas (The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) Trainer), Udayan Care |
| Corporate foundation (4) | Azim Premji Foundation, Monsanto Fund (US), Ernst & Young Foundation, Nasscom Foundation |
| Private foundation (family, individual or other) (3) | Ark Foundation, Latika Foundation, The Teacher Foundation |
| Private school-affiliated actor/individual (3) | Seem Yadav, Selvarasu (Mixed Higher Senior Secondary School), Shalini Kanwar, Susmita Roy (Lakshmipath Singhania Academy), Swait Roy (Lakshmipath Singhania Academy) |
| Government-affiliated actor/individual (3) | Savriti Singh (National Council of Education Research and Training,), Professor Mukesh Kothi (Central Board of Secondary Education, PEC Program), Neha Sharma (Central Board of Secondary Education, PEC Program) |
| Multilateral organization (1) | World Bank |

Table 15: Technical partners of the Bharti Foundation for curriculum, teaching and learning (2009-2012)

Source: Extracted from BF, 2015c; BF, 2010.

When asked about the Foundation's choice of partners, one staff member offered:

...for the main curriculum...we do not partner with NGOs and things like that because there are no big players who we would like to emulate ...we're not sure about the quality of smaller NGOs...we go back to the mainstream schooling system to partner with (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g).

Indeed, this view of other NGOs as inefficient or lacking quality was common in the Foundation. Before creating the Bharti Foundation in 2000, the Bharti Group primarily made grants to NGOs, which Sunil Mittal described in a media interview as “going into a large, black hole” (Live Mint, 2011). Another staff member shared: “as far as other NGOs are concerned...we don't have much interaction with them... the common factor is the Rajasthan government” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b). However, reflecting a general “hands-off” approach on

behalf of the state, the Foundation listed only three government actors that it selectively engaged with on specific issues in the SBS program (e.g., physical education curriculum) (see Table 14). Interviewees confirmed this. According to a Foundation official, the only local NGO that the Bharti Foundation partnered with in the implementation of the SBS model was chosen because of a personal relationship between the founder of the NGO (the retired head of a manufacturing multinational) and the former Corporate Director of Operations at Bharti Airtel (Interview with BF field staff member, 2012a). This approach also reflects what is seen in the PPP literature, in which the private sector tends to bypass civil society and teachers' organizations in constructing education models and selecting partners (Ball, 2008; Verger, 2012).

7.1.3 Privileging managerial over educational expertise

Finally, with an emphasis on managerial efficiency as key to the success of the SBS quality model, the Foundation could be seen championing managerial expertise over substantive education expertise in certain respects the design and implementation of the program. Amongst the seven members of the Foundation headquarters team interviewed for this study, who were each asked about their professional backgrounds prior to working at the Foundation, only one had a substantive background and expertise in basic education. This lack of an education background extended to the school level. One Foundation staff member was concerned that Bharti Foundation cluster coordinators acted more like auditors than advisors to support the pedagogical process in schools:

Though we have cluster coordinators...they are not from [a] teaching background...they are more like *bosses* in the school...they should be spending 70% of their time on observing lessons and seeing what is happening in the classroom...not just seeing whether maths is being taught, but seeing how the entire curriculum is being transacted... seeing whether there is holistic [learning] and not just seeing whether the teacher is teaching the class... (Interview with BF Headquarters Official, 2012g, emphasis added).

Such an approach is particularly problematic when coupled with the fact that there was ostensibly only one teacher trainer per district (see Section 6.2.3), with some states not even having trainers. This may help explain why teachers at visited schools struggled to implement the prescribed SBS pedagogy.

Another key example of the Foundation privileging managerial expertise over substantive education knowledge could be seen in the development of the SBS Operating Manual (see Section 6.2.1). The SBS Operating manual was spearheaded by the Foundation's "quality department" in 2008 (revised in 2010 and again in 2012). Foundation interviewees highly prized this department and felt it differentiated them from other organizations working in education for disadvantaged children (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a, 2012e). At the time of field research, senior staff of the Foundation's quality department were not educationists. Rather, they had backgrounds in corporate quality management and manufacturing industries.

The SBS manual was described as an amalgamation of "all this job experience" from the manufacturing sector in "implementing something [in this case, schooling] in a simplistic manner" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012a). Indeed, the Foundation's quality department and its operating manual were rooted in concepts of quality assurance that are traditionally more associated with industry than with schooling. Upon discussing the SBS operating manual, one senior Foundation staff member felt that the Foundation's lack of substantive education knowledge was an advantage for the Foundation: "...every single process [in the SBS program] is developed by me because... When you don't know, you struggle. The good thing is that I'm not an educationist because then you're coming from the perspective of 'that I know'" (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

Thus, the SBS program is seemingly an example resembling what Verger (2012) identified as a key component of international education PPPs, in that proponents "expect the state to modify its organizational culture by learning from the private sector at the managerial level" (p. 116). Ramdas (2011) outlines that a "symptom" of this phenomenon "may be found in the kind of skills that new foundations are seeking", which she describes as being possessed by "management consultants, business people, former industry leaders or lobbyists and scientists, each [...] expected to bring a crisp and coolly efficient approach to their work" (p. 3). Olmedo (2013) notes that this strategy is employed by philanthropic organizations internationally, calling it "strongly undemocratic because it privileges the 'right' people, usually those with the 'right' social backgrounds or attitudes" (p. 593). One could similarly characterize some of the Foundation's approach (i.e., replacing government teachers in SBS schools; school fees) as falling in line with the "fix the problem" mentality that Ramdas (2011) notes among new philanthropists. Ramdas (2011) claims that newer philanthropists coming from corporate

backgrounds apply the same mentality that allowed them to “yield measurable and fairly quick solutions... as hedge-fund managers, capital-market investors or software developers” (p. 3), to their philanthropic operations. As described in the literature review (See Section 3.2.3), many scholars argue that such approaches in education are problematic, as schooling is a complex, process-oriented endeavour that more often exhibits gradual qualitative change (Edwards, 2011a; Hess, 2005b), rather than immediate, measurable results.

7.2 Enabling conditions

As discussed in the literature review (see Section 3.3.2), Battilana et al. (2009) assert that mobilizing discourses, while crucial, are insufficient for an institutional entrepreneur to create institutional change. Battilana et al. (2009) identify two key “enabling conditions” that preclude success in institutional entrepreneurship: (1) “field characteristics”, defined as “jolts and crises...includ[ing] social upheaval, technological disruption, competitive discontinuity, and regulatory changes that might disturb the socially constructed, field-level consensus and invite the introduction of new ideas” (p. 73); and (2) an actor’s social position, which provides “access to the resources needed to engage in institutional entrepreneurship” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 76). This study found that these conditions were important to incentivizing and enabling the Foundation’s eventual insertion of aspects of its SBS model into wider institutional frameworks.

7.2.1 State-enabled space

According to Foundation staff, there was little state oversight of the Foundation’s activities when they first established SBS Greenfield schools in the state. A Foundation staff member admitted that “until the RTE Act came in, we were allowed to run schools even without recognition” in Rajasthan (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). The staff member elaborated that “most of the governments say yes to primary schooling without getting the school recognized...to encourage NGOs to come in...because [the recognition] process is fairly tedious” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). This phenomenon is not unusual. A number of previous studies have documented how state governments poorly enforce recognition requirements for private schools (e.g., Kingdon, 2005; Srivastava, 2008), requirements that even many government schools, particularly in rural areas, may not meet.

However, in interviews, the Foundation placed significant emphasis on PPP platforms in enabling the diffusion of the SBS model to the wider education sector (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012c). Foundation staff stressed that the initial phase of setting up Greenfield schools was an experimental phase of its engagement. One staff member described the Greenfield program as: “a series of controlled experiments in which we generate good processes, good policies, good practices...to provide quality education in the toughest [of] environments” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). At the time of field research, one employee described the diffusion of the SBS model to the government system thusly:

...we're now going to get on the next stage of actually [working] more closely with governments to start impacting the government system...That's where we'll actually be able to then define a role for ourselves and say we have a role in impacting the education system in India (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012c).

Indeed, when asked if the SBS Adopted School model had contributed any ideas or models that were carried over to the wider government system, a Rajasthan government education official claimed that the model's approach to partnership itself was instructive: “they [the Foundation] came up with the novel idea of adopting schools...where they would take complete ownership of the schools...for ten years” under the REI (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). According to a Rajasthan state education official, the Foundation developed the proposal for a MOU for school adoption and “the government was very enthusiastic about it” (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). Today, Foundation publications point to this “novel idea” as an example of the SBS Program's institutional impact:

...after the successful implementation of the ‘school adoption program’ of Bharti Foundation, the government [of Rajasthan] has now included this model (government schools being adopted and run by corporate) as a formal option in the state government's public-private partnership scheme (BF, 2015a).²⁶

This was confirmed by one of the Rajasthan government interviewees for this study (Interview with State Education Official, 2012a).

Admitting the importance of state-enabled space for its engagement, one Foundation staff member stated that the SBS program has “becom[e] dependent entirely on the proactiveness [*sic*]

²⁶ According to the Rajasthan government website, this PPP scheme is still under development (Rajasthan Council of Secondary Education, 2015).

of the state...otherwise you [the Foundation] keep banging [at] the door and they are not... so active at the same pace that we want to ...work with them” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). Indeed, as discussed in the context chapter (see Section 2.2.1), Rajasthan has historically been relatively open to PPP arrangements in education as compared to other states. When explaining why the Foundation engaged with significantly more schools in Rajasthan (78 total) as compared to Uttar Pradesh (16 total), another Foundation staff member offered:

...jointly we [the Foundation and the Rajasthan state government] work towards a particular theme and develop the education in the state. In UP [Uttar Pradesh]...nothing is existing, there is no such program...We'll have to deal with individual person and individual department...and you can't explore [options] in an already established platform (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e)

The REI thus seems to have provided fertile “field conditions” for institutional entrepreneurship in the form of “regulatory changes...to invite the introduction of new ideas” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 73), including the Foundation’s Adopted School model.

Foundation employees described how the Foundation’s institutional impact was felt beyond Rajasthan, claiming that the state government of Haryana invited the Foundation to contribute in designing a “School Nurturer” program based on the success of the Adopted Schools model (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012c). One employee further described the Foundation as operating as an “expertise organization” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e) for state governments, drawing from the SBS model to advise in areas including curriculum, training and remedial learning in rural schools. In fact, there have been many interesting additional developments in the Foundation’s activities since the time of field research in 2012 that demonstrate the Foundation gaining further momentum towards its goal to operate as an education expert, through new public-private partnership models. For example, the SBS Quality Support Program, established in 2012 just after the field research for this study, aims to “support the government schools towards improving the overall quality of the schooling experience” through “needs-based interventions” (BF, 2013, p. 7) that draw on the SBS model.

7.2.2 PPPs: An immature institutional field in Rajasthan

In addition to state-enabled space, the lack of “maturity” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 672) of the field of PPPs in education in Rajasthan may have also laid fertile ground for the Foundation’s

suggestion and ready acceptance of the Adopted Schools model by the Rajasthan government. The field could be described as “emerging”, i.e., it had “yet to develop certain institutional features [i.e.], leading actors, a coherent discourse, structures of cooperation and domination of accepted norms, mature organizational relationships” (Gardu et al., 2007, p. 672). As Pachauri (2012) noted in her study of the REI, there were less than a handful of state government staff dedicated to the program, despite the initiative covering numerous and complex partnership arrangements, and very few official details provided on how the partnerships would be designed and governed. This is not unusual for the governance of PPPs in India, as the Twelfth Five-Year Plan notes:

...the state governments generally do not have dedicated staff resources for handling PPP projects or for building the requisite capacity...such capacity is critical for conceptualising project proposals...executing the projects documents and monitoring implementation (Planning Commission, 2012, sec. 3.122).

Indeed, government interviewees admitted that oversight bodies for the SBS Adopted School model met only annually, due to human resource constraints (Interview with State Education Official, 2012b). Verger (2012) argues that this lack of government oversight in PPPs in education is a global trend, outlining the necessity of “a quality education assurance agency” (p. 117) for PPPs which “among other functions...should specify [the] outcomes that schools should achieve, and elaborate the corresponding performance indicators” (Verger, 2012, p. 117). The Foundation’s MOU with Rajasthan specifies no outcomes or performance indicators, which gave the Foundation considerable control over the design and implementation of the program, in part allowing them to virtually transfer the SBS Greenfield model into government space (adopted schools) with very few adjustments. With such a large PPP program, they may also have emerged as *de-facto* leader in the field of PPPs for education.

7.3 Social position: A fluid organizational identity

Other private actors responded to the government’s “invitation of ideas” under the REI. The Rajasthan government struck up two other partnerships for the adoption of schools, one with a group of small-medium enterprises under the banner of the Confederation of Indian Industry (three schools), and another with a local private, family foundation called the Amber Trust (20 schools) (Pachauri, 2012). Both of these partnerships were much smaller in scale than the SBS

Adopted Schools model, involving mostly grant-making for school infrastructure and improvement (Pachauri, 2012). Additionally, although there is a dearth of systematic data on philanthropy in India, documentary analysis and interviews revealed that no other philanthropic actor that was directly operating so many schools in Rajasthan at the time of field research. This begs the question, why was the Foundation the only noticeable actor to suggest the “novel idea” of taking complete ownership and management of the schools, and to operate its own schools, at such a large scale? The answer may lie in its social position.

As described in Section 3.3.2, an actor’s social position is crucial to successful institutional entrepreneurship because it determines both its perception of the field and “access to, and skills in leveraging, the scarce and critical resources needed to mount political action” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 85). These resources can be both material and immaterial. The latter encapsulated in mechanisms such as “social capital”, which accrues to “one’s position in a web of social relations that provides access to information and political support” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 84) and in particular, the actor’s “awareness of other fields and diverse institutional logics” (p. 84). The following sections demonstrate how the Bharti Foundation gained considerable financial and social resources through its affiliation with the Bharti Group of Companies, which also allowed it to overcome a number of institutional constraints and potentially institutionalize change in certain cases. Interestingly, at the same time, the Foundation also distanced itself from the Bharti Group at certain junctures when it was advantageous, thus “crafting an attractive social identity that appeal[ed] to diverse potential field members” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 85).

7.3.1 Securing community land: Overcoming the “liability of privateness”

A key institutional constraint facing the Foundation in the early days of the SBS program was the necessity of obtaining permission from local village governments to lease land, or to solicit their donation of land, to establish Greenfield schools. In fact, one field official described how gaining the trust of villages to set up SBS schools was one of the most significant constraints in the early days of the SBS program, claiming that the *gram panchayats* assumed the motivations of the Foundation must be commercial given the linkage with the Bharti Group of Companies. One Foundation field official conveyed how residents feared the Foundation would use the land to expand Bharti Airtel’s cell tower reach: “the community was [saying], ‘No, you

will make an Airtel office over here, you will make a [cell] tower over there” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). Although few interviewees would comment on this earlier phase of the program in Rajasthan, in a *Washington Post* interview the Foundation CEO described “the wrath of cane-wielding villagers worried about losing their land” (Lakshmi, 2013). Bhanji and Oxley (2013) refer to the phenomenon of suspicion of corporate investments in education as “the liability of privateness” (p. 291)

As mentioned in the literature review, several scholars and international organizations, including proponents of the “new” philanthropy, have noted a global trend of “win-win” philanthropic engagement (see Section 3.2.2), in which corporate actors strategically direct their philanthropic engagement to bring short or long-term profitability to their parent companies (Bishop & Green, 2008; Porter & Kramer, 2002; van Fleet, 2011a; Winthrop et al., 2013). Indeed, as the Foundation of a prominent telecom company, the Bharti Foundation could potentially seek new markets through engagement in education, both through donating Bharti Group of Companies’ products and services to schools, and in boosting its image within the markets in which it operated. A cursory review of Indian media reports reveals this to be consistent with the Bharti Group of Companies’ growth plan, which the CEO of affiliated company Bharti Airtel calls the ‘matchbox’ strategy: “growth will come from the [rural] villages, and [Bharti Group of Companies] should be present wherever a matchbox is available” (Joshi & Mukherjee, 2008). There are also business reasons for telecom companies to develop goodwill with governments, as they hold the key to obtaining licenses for certain telecom operations (2G spectrums) (Sidel, 2008).

However, in the case of land for SBS Greenfield schools, it seems that constructing a “neutral broker” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 85) role for itself was especially important for the Foundation as a corporate philanthropic actor operating in India. Indeed, Bhanji and Oxley’s (2013) study of major international corporate actors in education found that in the Indian context, philanthropic actors felt it was inappropriate to engage in the “explicit articulation” that “corporate responsibility and commercial priorities are not in conflict with one another, but rather [in] alignment” (p. 16). Despite the number of avenues in which the Bharti Group of Companies could have potentially profited through the SBS program, the Foundation continuously insisted that its activities were only motivated by “philanthropic” reasons. In an interview with an Indian

newspaper, Sunil Mittal flatly denied that the SBS program was a mechanism of expanding Airtel's markets to rural areas in India by drawing on lack of fees in SBS schools:

...in our [Bharti Group of Companies] case if you look at it we [the Bharti Foundation] are deep in villages where we are not truly selling too many of our products as in mobile telephony... we go into the villages which have no schools or very few schools and provide free education, computers, uniform, book, midday meals and we are not trying to leverage that work to say that [Bharti] Airtel has developed a very strong aura around it. We are doing it because our heart is there (Money Control, 2010).

Yet in the case of land for SBS schools, indirect and secondary sources (i.e., Foundation interviews, publications) seem to suggest that there was a lack of trust of the frame articulators (the Bharti Group of Companies) by community members, prompting the Foundation to draw on its monetary and social capital to gain legitimacy.²⁷ First, the Foundation claimed that it promised local governments that upon constructing the schools, the community would not have to undertake any monetary responsibility for the schools in the future (Field notes on internal documents, 2012d), ostensibly an important statement for many *sarpanches* (village heads) in agreeing to donate land (Field notes on internal documents, 2012d). However as demonstrated in Section 7.1.1 above, according to the Foundation's own publications, this was not the case in practice.

Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Chairman of the Foundation and Managing Director at Bharti Group of Companies, described an additional key strategy the Foundation pursued in Ludhiana, Punjab in a televised interview:

I went up to [the Deputy Commissioner of education] and said 'look, we want to do this program, but I am unable to talk to the village *sarpanch[es]* and *panchayat* in each of the villages....so could you please get 100 village *sarpanches* under one roof and I'll just interact with them (Economic Times Now, 2013).

Indeed, Battilana et al. (2009) describes how "convincing actors who themselves occupy higher social positions to endorse their project" (p. 84) is a key mobilizing strategy for institutional entrepreneurs "when their social position does not enable them to easily mobilize others" (p. 84). Often, institutional entrepreneurs will turn to "formal authority" or actors with "legitimately recognized right[s] to make decisions" (Phillips et al., 2000, p. 33), in this case the

²⁷ In order to confirm these findings, the views of relevant community members would have to be sought. Seeking community views on the SBS program was not part of this study.

state government, to “promote consumption of their discourse by other actors” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 84)

This championing of government endorsement can also be seen in Rajasthan, with some government officials even contributing to the cost of SBS Greenfield schools where *panchayats* would not. For example, in the early days of the program, the Foundation widely publicized how Abhishek Singhvi, a member of parliament, reportedly allocated a sum of Rs. 2.5 million (approximately \$USD 39,000) from his Member of Parliament Local Development Scheme Fund (a government funding scheme for MPs) to fund the construction of SBS Greenfield schools (BF, 2008a, p. 15).²⁸ In the early days of the SBS Greenfield model, several prominent members of the state and even national governments were present at the inauguration of schools in Rajasthan, including Pratibha Patil, then-President of India, at an inauguration in 2008. The Foundation also framed the design and launch of the entire SBS program as a response to a speech by then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to inaugurate the Bharti School of Telecommunications and Technology, in which he stated, “I hope the inspiration provided by Sunil Mittal and Bharti Foundation will encourage others also to take up PPPs in education and training...” (Prime Minister’s Office, 2006, p. 1). The Foundation’s 2011 annual report attests that “it was this clarion call to the nation” (BF, 2012a, p. 6) which inspired them to develop the SBS program.

7.3.2 Influencing RTE norms

During the field research for this study in fall 2012, Foundation staff expressed that because of the recently passed RTE’s renewed focus on private school recognition, they felt they could no longer rely on the Foundation’s informal arrangement with the state to evade recognition for SBS Greenfield schools (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). Although all four of the SBS Greenfield head teachers visited for this study claimed that their schools were recognized, headquarters interviewees asserted that the schools were “in the process of recognition” and “[would] be getting recognized” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e), but faced a major constraint, i.e., infrastructure.

The RTE rules mandate primary schools must have at least one teacher for every 30 students (Government of India, 2009, sec. Part II Schedule 1.b.), and one classroom per teacher (2009, sec. Part II Schedule 2.i.). As demonstrated in Section 6.3.2, most visited SBS Greenfield

²⁸ Figures based on exchange rate obtained October 28, 2015 from <http://www.xe.com/currency/usd-us-dollar>.

schools did not meet these norms. One Foundation staff member shared that the Foundation had to exert considerable bargaining power to achieve recognition in this case: “We have to fight with [the] government and say you know your [RTE] says one room per class. It doesn’t say one room per class in single shift” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). According to the Foundation staff, they were ultimately successful: “originally the bureaucrats said no ... but we’ll be getting recognition” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d).

Indeed, the Foundation’s 2011-2012 Annual Report released within one month after the field research for this study declares that all SBS Greenfield schools in Rajasthan had been recognized in 2012 (BF, 2012a, p. 13). However, it is highly unlikely the Greenfield schools visited would have been upgraded to meet requirements in the short time between field research and the release of this report. It is more likely that the state’s issuance of recognition was based on a continuing informal arrangement with the Foundation.

RTE norms also impacted SBS adopted schools. Rajasthan’s RTE rules brought into force an increase in teachers’ salaries at government schools as laid out by India’s Central Pay Commission (Government of Rajasthan Education Department, 2011, sec. 19). The MOU for the SBS adopted schools was not altered after the passing of the RTE and Rajasthan RTE rules to reflect these changes, only indicating that “the staff employed by BF will be on BF’s rolls and will be given the salaries as per the Bharti Foundation’s policy” (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec. 5.3). Teacher salaries at SBS Greenfield and adopted schools were the same, with several Foundation staff noting that they were much less than government salaries, and one claiming that “government salaries are four to five times what our [SBS] salaries are” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012d). Indeed, annual reports covering the years before, during and after field research placed the average teacher salary at SBS schools at less than Rs. 7000/month (without indicating specific amounts) (BF, 2011b, 2012a, 2013), which is indeed less than the salaries specified by the Central Pay Commission of that period of approximately Rs. 13,900/month (Sixth Central Pay Commission, 2008).

Rajasthan’s RTE Rules do not prescribe a minimum salary for private unaided schools (including SBS Greenfield schools) (The High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan at Jodhpur, 2015). One staff member claimed that the Foundation used its close ties to the government to influence the state to adopt RTE rules that were more flexible in this respect:

We were actually closely involved with State government while they were...drafting their [RTE] state rules...we've been an active contributor to the formation...in some places we actually tr[ie]d to you know, I won't say influence them but...kind of share with them...look at us, we [follow] a different set of rules...we have tried to, you know, get some rules out of the book which actually [influenced] our salary of teachers (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e).

This influence was not confirmed with government representatives. Yet in a presentation at the Global CSR Summit in February 2014, the Foundation listed “Rules for RTE” as one of the areas where the Foundation has had an impact on “central/state policies and programs” (BF, 2014d). While this study could not gather conclusive data showing specific changes attributed to the Foundation, one key difference between Rajasthan’s draft RTE rules of 2010 and the final rules of 2011 was the removal of a clause regarding teachers in private unaided schools, which read: “in case of teachers of private schools, salary and allowances and their terms and conditions of service shall be decided by the school management subject to legislations and regulations, if any, in force” (Government of Rajasthan, 2010, sec. 18.2).

A staff member rationalized that SBS schools should be exempt from certain RTE norms because the Bharti Foundation is a private philanthropic actor: “We are actually strengthening [education] services...which isn't our primary responsibility” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). Another stated: “if they [the government] go by the rulebook they actually might be able to, you know, catch us. But since we are doing good work and, you know, supporting them for years...we haven't faced [many] difficulties” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012e). Some interviewees went further in expressing the impression that the Foundation is “outside” RTE rules, arguing that “...we're not really bound by [the rules], being a private or corporate organization” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012g). This is, of course, not the case, with the RTE Act applying to public and private institutions alike (Government of India, 2009).

This sentiment was extended to SBS Greenfield and adopted schools, with one Foundation staff member noting that “in some [SBS adopted schools] we have only two or three rooms then you have to go the government and actually negotiate with them and they actually construct [a] few more rooms there” (Interview with BF headquarters staff member, 2012b). Staff members were adamant that providing infrastructure was the government’s responsibility, despite the MOU stating that the Foundation could provide infrastructure inputs (including extra rooms) to adopted schools (School Education Department of Rajasthan & Bharti Foundation, 2007, sec.

3.a.). This lends credence to Quinn et al.'s (2014) finding that private foundations, due to their unique social position, are able to simultaneously present as both private and non-profit, oscillating between these identities when either is more strategic.

7.3.3 Disseminating the SBS model

Finally, in order to have an institutional impact, institutional entrepreneurs must be able to disseminate their ideas as broadly as possible (Battilana et al., 2009). Thus, they often demonstrate a high level of “reach centrality” or ability to “access a large number of field members through a limited number of intermediaries” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 85). As with securing community land at the state level, the Foundation was seemingly able to secure easy access to key policy-makers at the state level through the influence of Bharti Group executives. The Foundation claims that it “play[s] a key role as a resource organization to national and international institutions such as the Ministry of Human Resource Development” (BF, 2013, p. 32), and that its “representatives are members of committees like Planning Commission, steering the national education agenda and helping the state governments develop their Public Private Partnership (PPP) models” (Bharti Foundation, 2011a, p. 39).²⁹ Indeed, Indian newspapers reported Rakesh Bharti Mittal participating in a committee of major industry leaders to advise then-Minister of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Kapil Sibal on this scheme (R. Chopra, 2012).

Beyond the government, the Foundation asserts that it advised on PPPs to various corporate networks and organizations in India, including the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) (BF, 2013, p. 32). While this was not independently confirmed, it is notable that Bharti Group executives have thick linkages with these organizations. Sunil Mittal is a member and former president of CCI (2007-2008), while his brother Rajan Mittal (Chairman of Bharti Group) is a member and former president of FICCI (2010-2011). Sunil Mittal also has substantial international linkages in business and philanthropy, for example through his role as a long-standing member of the Carnegie Endowment Board for International Peace in Washington (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015, website). Speaking to his role to the media,

²⁹ The Planning Commission was dismantled in 2014 by the new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It has been replaced by the NITI Aayog, or National Institute for Transforming India.

he stated, “if you ask me what is Bharti Foundation’s vision [*sic*]...[it is] to be one day known like a Carnegie Endowment or a Rockefeller Foundation, and we have started well” (Money Control, 2010).

Furthermore, the Foundation has claimed that it serves as a “learning resource” for the “education agendas” of international agencies including the World Bank, DFID, and the European Commission (BF, 2011b, p. 39). Indeed, Olmedo’s (2013) analysis of transnational networks in philanthropy singles out the Bharti Foundation as engaging in “well-funded and influential” (Nambissan & Ball, 2010, p. 2) global advocacy networks, composed of foundations, companies, and civil society organizations for national and international policy-making in education. Olmedo (2013) argues that these actors rely on philanthropic spaces of “meetingness” (p. 590) to share their ideas, which he describes as having “recently sprung up in all contexts and heavily promoted and funded by philanthropic programmes in the shape of seminars, symposiums, conferences, summits, etc...” (Olmedo, 2013, p. 591).

For the Foundation, such spaces of international “meetingness” were a key component of its institutional entrepreneurship. The Foundation emphasized that “a conscious effort has been made to showcase the program at various national and international seminars and conferences to share [its] learning with other educators” (BF, 2011b, p. 39), and that they received “a lot of invitations to share best practices” through conferences, working groups, publications and other fora (BF, 2013, p. 34). The Foundation has also presented its SBS model at numerous domestic and international education conferences, speaking at 21 conferences in 2013-2014 alone (BF, 2014a). Some were education-focused spaces (e.g., World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha, Qatar; World Bank International Conference on Improving the Quality of Secondary Education), however, most have been on CSR or philanthropy more broadly (e.g., “Strategic CSR – Moving Beyond Moral Sentiments” by the Indian Institute of Management) (BF, 2014a). Foundation staff viewed studies on the program, such as this one, as a potential way of disseminating their SBS model to wider international audiences.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Overview

The primary objective of this study was to critically investigate the nature of the engagement of one philanthropic actor in India and its influence in the provision of elementary education. To accomplish this, the study conducted a case study of one such actor, the Bharti Foundation, and one such actor's program, the SBS program. The study examined the objectives of the Foundation, and how it mediated and influenced institutional frameworks for elementary education in pursuing these objectives.

Battilana et al.'s (2009) model of institutional entrepreneurship was instructive in this respect. The study used this model to examine whether and/or how the Foundation used its social position, field conditions, and articulated and used mobilizing frames to mediate and alter aspects of the wider institutional framework for elementary education in Rajasthan in line with the Foundation's particular vision of educational change. This study found a number of key conclusions, implications for theory and practice, and areas of further inquiry, explored below.

8.2 Conclusions of the study

This study found that the Bharti Foundation's overall objective was to operate as a "quality expert" in education, offering its SBS program as a template of change to improve the quality of education throughout the state sector. According to the growing literature on embedded agency and institutional change (Battilana et al., 2009; Maguire et al., 2004; Quinn et al., 2014) (see Section 2.3), the Foundation thus sought to operate as an "institutional entrepreneur", leveraging change in the wider institutional framework for education in India.

Furthermore, the study found that the Foundation, a corporate philanthropic actor with no previous experience in elementary education, successfully operated as a "quality expert" in elementary education in Rajasthan. Specifically, the study found examples where the Foundation was able to mediate and alter the institutional framework for education by drawing on this "expert" position. For example, it was able to embed its particular vision of PPPs in education, captured in the SBS Adopted Schools model, into the state's repertoire of PPP arrangements (See Section 7.2.1). The study concludes that the Foundation harnessed three enabling processes and factors to position itself as an expert, including the Foundation's social position, state-enabled

space through PPP models, and most importantly, powerful mobilizing frames rooted in domestic and international policy discourses.

As a corporate, philanthropic actor, the Bharti Foundation was able to employ a wide repertoire of mobilizing frames to “mobilize adherents and de-mobilize antagonists” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614) to support its engagement in education. The Foundation did this primarily by drawing on its affiliation with the Bharti Group of Companies, the latter a highly successful corporate actor in India’s knowledge economy, and by championing itself as uniquely positioned to address what it identified as key quality issues in basic schooling for rural children.

Emphasizing India’s national development as tightly interwoven with the country’s place in knowledge economy industries, the Foundation promoted a human capital conceptualization of education quality, and positioned itself as providing needed education expertise in both content (i.e., through enhancing the economic relevance of education) and form (i.e., through enhancing the management of education) in public education systems. These findings are consistent with the literature on “new” philanthropy (stemming from corporate actors in particular) which argues that newer philanthropic actors draw on their business expertise as a guide for their engagement (Bishop & Green, 2008; Desai & Kharas, 2008; Sidel, 2008).

Crucially, and in line with the critical literature on newer philanthropic engagement in education (Ball, 2008; Hess, 2005b; Saltman, 2010), the Foundation’s legitimizing arguments were rooted in contested assumptions about the inherent inefficiencies of government approaches; what constitutes “good quality” education; and what the purpose of good quality education should be. Indeed, in an effort to realize its vision of relevance and efficiency, the Foundation seemed to privilege its own managerial expertise over substantive educational expertise in some cases, which could result in a technicist, “top-down” approach on certain issues (e.g., school processes; school fees).

This approach could be characterised as “top-down” by scholars regarding the engagement of certain newer philanthropic (Ball, 2008; Olmedo, 2013) and private actors in education (Verger, 2012). The study revealed some evidence to suggest that in taking a “top-down”, expert approach, the Foundation was able to promote its particular “unidirectional” conceptualization of accountability. For example, interviews and documentary analysis strongly suggested that the state government allowed the Foundation to have considerable freedom in crafting the SBS Adopted schools program. The Foundation was able to position itself as more of

a “mentor” for than a “partner” of the state, and eschewed state control and accountability mechanisms.

Additionally, this study found that the Foundation relied on state support in the form of PPP platforms, as well as the emerging nature of the PPP field in Rajasthan, to advance its institutional entrepreneurship through its SBS models. However, the Foundation faced a number of constraining factors to its institutional entrepreneurship. Chief among these were the compulsions of the RTE Act and recognition norms for private unaided schools. This study found that the Foundation strategically drew on its social position as a philanthropic actor to negotiate and legitimize its exemption from certain regulations regarding private school recognition and the RTE rules. Additionally, secondary sources (i.e., Foundation publications and media articles) suggest that the Foundation used its social position to obtain community land for the SBS program. It seemingly did this by drawing on its links with the Bharti Group to obtain the support of the state government, which could legitimize its authority to community members who were suspicious of its intentions.

However, as Edwards (2011a) asserts, in current debates on philanthropy, the “conclusion that the wealthy are assuming more power and influence in society against a background of weak accountability structures...is hardly new” (p. 398). The more interesting issue, according to him, is the “cost and benefits of [their] approaches” (Edwards, 2011a, p. 398). In fact, this study found that the Foundation framed its top-down influence as a strength that would enable quality education through its expert engagement. This fit well with its conceptualization of managerial efficiency, and was a cherished part of its tightly controlled model. This study did not substantially or systematically examine whether the SBS model provided better “quality” education than available alternatives for the children who access SBS schools. However, the lack of systematic study on the SBS program’s relative efficiency, effectiveness, or quality is in itself significant, and problematic. The Foundation’s own claims to quality are substantiated with internal and external audits and evaluations. But external audits and evaluations were not made available for this study. Publicly available evaluations demonstrated that SBS students achieved higher learning levels than government schools at the same per-child cost, and that SBS students are more “holistically developed” than children in surrounding schools, but these assessments did not control for socioeconomic status. Furthermore, school visits revealed key inputs and processes in the SBS quality model, such as the integration of ICTs, English, and child-centric

learning, translated poorly in practice at visited schools. Thus, the robustness of the Foundation's evidence can be questioned. However, these quality issues require further in-depth investigation to make substantive conclusions.

8.3 Implications for practice

In their case study of private foundations as institutional entrepreneurs regarding charter schools in the United States, Quinn et al. (2014) conclude that their “choice to limit [their] study within a single state limits its generalizability to other contexts” (Quinn et al., 2014, p. 963). Indeed, this case study's focus on one Foundation's program, over a short time period, in one state, also limits its generalizability. Merriam (2014) suggests that “transferability” (p. 223) is a more appropriate term for the validity of single-case or contextually-specific studies such as this one, in which the findings can be used as a starting point to examine other settings or phenomena, particularly those similar in nature. In this sense, this study offers a starting point for investigating a number of potential implications for practice, theory, and areas of further inquiry.

Available evidence suggests that philanthropic engagement in education similar to that of the Bharti Foundation is set to increase in India in the near future. As discussed section 5.3.1, many other “newer” knowledge economy corporations in the Indian context, such as software companies Wipro and Infosys, and mobile operator Aircel, have created and funded corporate foundations which focus on basic education. Crucially, these foundations seemingly have similar aims of institutional entrepreneurship, with stated goals of “transforming” wider education systems and paying particular attention to quality. An additional layer of institutional legitimacy, or “enabling field conditions” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 67), for such engagement was added shortly after the field research for this study with the passing of India's *Companies Act, 2013* and the CSR compulsion (Parliament of India, 2013, sec. 135 (5)). The Companies Act is poised to foster an increase in philanthropic-type corporate engagement in education, with the potential to increase the operation of programs and grant-making by some “newer” actors that fostered their fortunes through the liberalization reforms of the 1990s, including those related to knowledge economy industries.

However, as the findings of this study suggest, the field of philanthropic engagement in education is characterized in some contexts by weakly defined institutional frameworks, including unclear authority and accountability structures. As corporate philanthropic engagement

potentially increases, it will be important for policy-makers to develop and encourage oversight and partnership structures for this engagement that have adequately robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including systematic evaluations. Under the *Companies Act*, there is an opportunity for policy-makers to bring philanthropic actors under new oversight structures and greater regulation and accountability.

8.4 Implications for theory

The majority of literature on institutional entrepreneurship is relatively new, having accumulated over the past decade. Thus, Battilana et al. (2009) assert their model of institutional entrepreneurship is “contingent” (p. 89) and should “evolve as future research provides a more fine-grained understanding of the process” (p. 89) (see also Section 3.3.2).

This study largely confirmed many of Battilana et al.’s (2009) key findings in relation to the process of institutional entrepreneurship. For example, the study found that resonant discursive frames were important for the Bharti Foundation in inspiring institutional change. This study also confirms the model’s emphasis on social position and field conditions in institutionalizing change. In line with Quinn et al.’s (2014) study of private foundations as institutional entrepreneurs, this study further finds that corporate operating foundations are well-positioned to act as institutional entrepreneurs, because of their social capital, existence across multiple organizational fields, and ability to both envision the change they seek, fund it, and disseminate it amongst influential networks.

Indeed, this study lends credence to Battilana et al.’s (2009) hypothesis that “multiple embeddedness” (Battilana et al., 2009, p. 84), i.e., being embedded in a number of different fields, positions organizations to be institutional entrepreneurs. In this case, the Bharti Foundation variously drew on its identity as simultaneously corporate and philanthropic to advance its vision of change, and also to overcome certain constraints. For government actors, for example, the Foundation’s mobilizing frames relating its “privateness” (e.g., managerial efficiency) were advantageous. Yet according to the Foundation, in the case of obtaining community land (See Section 7.3.1.), these frames simply reinforced a “liability of privateness” and lack of trust. In this case, the Foundation had to emphasize its philanthropic nature and facilitate government endorsement via its links with the Bharti Group of Companies to solicit the donation or lease of land.

Finally, in a potential addition or complication to Battilana et al.'s (2009) model, the findings of this study suggest that embeddedness across multiple fields can also be a constraining factor to institutional entrepreneurship. For example, some evidence suggested that the Bharti Foundation sought to build the image of the Bharti Group of Companies through branding. This was reflected in actions such as placing a trademark on the SBS school model, and building clauses into the SBS adopted schools MOU preventing the state from adopting the Foundation's practices without express permission. In some respects, these measures may have allowed the Foundation to have propriety control over the SBS model, thereby accentuating its role as an education expert. However, this approach, paradoxically, could prevent elements of the SBS model from diffusing and becoming institutionalized in the wider institutional framework for education.

8.5 Areas of further inquiry

This study raised a number of areas in need of further inquiry. Below are some recommendations for future research on the topic of philanthropy for education in India, and other developing countries. Thus, if nothing else, this study provides a starting point for further, more in-depth research on the influence of philanthropic actors in basic education in India and in the South. The hope is that it emphasizes the need for critical analysis of a phenomenon often left unexamined.

8.5.1 Systematic studies of private foundation models and programs

Increased philanthropic engagement in education is a phenomenon in a number of other middle-income and lower-middle income countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. However, focused studies, particularly multiple case studies comparing and contrasting a variety of non-state actors engaging in such activities and their relative effectiveness, are few and far between. While the findings of this study cannot be extended to other actors in education in India or globally, they certainly indicate the need to more critically examine corporate and wider philanthropic engagement in the sector. In particular, greater efforts are needed to assess the validity of claims regarding greater cost-efficiency, learning levels, teaching-learning processes, student experience, and other quality indicators through robust evaluations. Crucially, such

studies should prioritize the views of often-excluded stakeholders such as communities, parents, teachers and educators.

8.5.2 The potential impact of India's Companies Act

As already discussed, India's Companies Act has important potential implications for the field of existing corporate philanthropy and newer forms of this type of engagement in education in India. As the field research for this study was conducted before the Act was passed, its impact on the Bharti Foundation's activities could not be systematically examined. However, media reports and Bharti Foundation publications indicate some interesting developments. For example, in one newspaper interview, the Bharti Foundation CEO described how the Companies Act brought "fundamental changes" (Cause Because Online, 2015) to the Bharti Group's CSR strategy which have impacted the Foundation:

...earlier they [Bharti Group of Companies] could just write a cheque and forget it. Now they must have a committee and we [the Foundation] are answerable to them...the reporting that we have to do now for the board is more extensive and has to be more engaging. We have to now sell our business to them. We have to explain, "This is our project, this is what you are funding, this is what you will get" (Cause Because Online, 2015)

This suggests that under the Act, the Foundation may be steered to more overtly "strategic" philanthropy in which the benefits to its founding corporation are more overt because of CSR compulsions.

Furthermore, it seems that the Foundation's new funding under the Act is not primarily directed towards education. Rather, it appears to be falling in line with the Prime Minister's national initiative *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* ("Clean India Mission"). This initiative was launched in 2014 and focuses on improving hygiene facilities and infrastructure cleanliness across India. Under the Foundation's new program *Satya Bharti Abhiyan*, the Foundation has ostensibly "constructed and delivered" (BF, 2015c, p. 1) more than 5,000 household toilets across the country. This suggests a tight fit between new CSR spending and national government initiatives, the implications of which could benefit from further critical analysis.

8.5.3 The impact on other non-state actors

The pervasiveness of policy discourses and institutional arrangements privileging business skills in solving educational problems raises questions about the funding and role that other community and grassroots organizations may expect in India. To add further complexity, NGOs have seen sharp declines in funding under new restrictions on foreign donations to organizations operating within India (N. Sengupta, 2011). In discussing the implications of India's Companies Act, some media sources report the fear amongst NGOs of a "crowding out" effect: "Firms have created their own foundations... They're also more likely to receive grants, therefore crowding out NGOs" (Business Standard, 2013). Indeed, as Maguire et al. (2004) posit, institutional entrepreneurship can reinforce certain institutional relationships while causing others to "atrophy and disappear" (p. 673). This echoes Battilana et al.'s (2009) cyclical model of institutional entrepreneurship in which the social position of the entrepreneur is often elevated through the process of institutional change, changing the configuration of an organizational field in the process. The impact of philanthropic engagement, not only on the role of state actors, but also on other non-state actors within the field, is thus also a topic in need of focused critical analysis.

8.5.4 The role of global forces

The literature review for this study demonstrated how mobilizing frames similar to the Foundation's frames are strategically employed in many countries to support philanthropic engagement in education (Section 3.2). A growing body of literature postulates that this "consensus" on "newer" and more "business-like" forms of philanthropy worldwide can be attributed to the rise of newly emerging policy communities that bring together philanthropists, corporations, international organizations and policy-makers (Ball, 2007; Bhanji, 2014; Olmedo, 2013). Some claim these legitimizing discourses are further supported by global, neoliberal policy "orthodoxies" (Ball, 1998, p. 122), which simultaneously push for education to be more efficient and less state-controlled, and emphasise the importance of employability through education (Ball & Olmedo, 2011). As briefly discussed in Section 7.3.3, the Bharti Foundation is part of a number of influential international networks, though this was not the focus of this study. Thus, the role of international actors in influencing the Foundation's, or indeed other philanthropic actors' engagement in education in the South, is an area in need of further analysis.

8.5.5 South-South philanthropic engagement

Along this vein, the Bharti Group of Companies' CSR activities in education have international dimensions. Separate from the Bharti Foundation's activities, Airtel Africa, a Bharti Group subsidiary, initiated the 'Our School' project in 2010. This is described as an "adopt-a-school" initiative in 38 government and private schools across 14 African countries in which Airtel Africa operates (Bharti Airtel, 2015).³⁰ The objective of the project is stated as: "wor[king] towards improving the quality and delivery of education to children, in underprivileged communities" (Airtel Africa, 2015, website, no p. number). The company provides little information on how the project is structured and implemented, though indicates that it is carried out in partnership with education ministries (Airtel Africa, 2015, website). Such a project could provide an interesting case study to understand the influence of corporate philanthropy/CSR activities in education as mediated through South-South engagement. In particular, a cross-case analysis with other philanthropic initiatives could illuminate the influence of this engagement and how its institutional framework differs from domestic philanthropic engagement or from North-South philanthropic engagement in education.

³⁰ Participant countries include: Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

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Appendix 1: List of 49 key processes outlined in SBS Operating Manual

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Registration/Admission | 27. Professional Upgradation |
| 2. Household Survey | 28. Advance Salary Loan |
| 3. Monthly School Report (MSR) | 29. Wedding Gift |
| 4. Mid Day Meal | 30. Birthday and Wedding Anniversary |
| 5. Cultural Activities and Events | 31. Mobile Phone |
| 6. Complaint Handling | 32. Employee Separation Process |
| 7. Community Service | 33. Assembly Process |
| 8. Housekeeping and Hygiene | 34. Baseline Assessment |
| 9. Movement of School Staff | 35. Curriculum Implementation |
| 10. Out of School Visits | 36. Conduct of Examination |
| 11. Parent Teacher Meeting | 37. Library Process |
| 12. Head Teachers Meeting | 38. Notebook Correction |
| 13. Child Protection Policy | 39. Remedial Improvement Program |
| 14. Medical Emergency or Tragedy | 40. Staff Meeting |
| 15. Safety Management | 41. Donation received – cash in kind |
| 16. Health Management | 42. Imprest Settlement ³¹ |
| 17. Compensation Structure | 43. Transfer of Asset |
| 18. Head Teacher Allowance | 44. Guidelines on Media Handling |
| 19. Leave | 45. Volunteering |
| 20. Travel | 46. Control of Document and Records |
| 21. Inland Transfer | 47. Internal Quality Audit |
| 22. Local Travel | 48. IT Support |
| 23. Reward & Recognition | 49. Building Maintenance |
| 24. Spot the Hero | |
| 25. Long Service Award | |
| 26. Professional Development Program | |

³¹ Refers to amount of money available at the school level for small expenditures
Source: Field notes on internal documents, 2012f

Appendix 2: List of SBS program partners 2009-2012

| Type of Partnership | Partners |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Corpus | Bharti Airtel Limited, Bharti Overseas, DLF Limited, Essar Investment Limited, Kalpana Morparia, Morgan Stanley, OKS SPANTECH, Tides Foundation (Google), Essar Investment Limited, Kalpana Morparia (individual), Warburg Pincus Inc. |
| Consulting Partners | Ernst & Young Private, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, JC Bhalla & Co |
| Individual Partners | Abhishek Vats, Ajay Lai, Akhil Gupta, Amar Sarin, Amit Chandra, Amit Sikdar, Anil Kukreti, BS Shathanraju, Badri Agarwal, Oliver Haarmann, Padam Budhwar, Pankah Bansal, Parveen Dalal, RR Saxena, Rajiv Keshri, Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Ranga Kota, Sadaf Naz Sayed, Deepa Budwar, Deepika Mittal, Devender Kumar Sood, Harjot Sandhu, Hawli Ram Bansi Lal, Ian Wright, Kalpana Morparia, Manoj Kumar, KDDI Corporation, Neeraj Bodra, Santosh Kumar, Rajit, Ramit, Eisha, Shavrin, Kavin Mittal, Sanjeev Khanna, Saurabh Anand Prakash, Shantha Raju, Sonia Kochler, Sridar R, Sudhir Kumar Agrawal, Sunil Bharti Mittal, Varun Jain, KDDI Corporation, Vijay Chadda, Neeraj Bodra, Jyoti Yadav, Santosh Kumar, Mohit Parasher (DM), Sandeep Gosh |
| IT Support Partners | HCL Technologies, IBM India Private Limited, Huawei Telecommunications (I) Co Pvt. Ltd, IBM India Private Limited, PCS Technology |
| Material Partners | Axis Bank, Cosco India Limited, Falg Foundation, JHS Svendgaard Laboratories Limited, Kukuyo (notebooks), Luxor, Mahindra and Mahindra Limited, Moser Baer India Limited, Team Supplier Development, TOMS Shoes |
| Monetary Partners | AXIND, Nokia Siemens Networks, Bharti Airtel Limited, OKS SPANTECH, Bharti AZA Life Insurance OCompany Limited, Polycom, Johnson and Johnson Limited, JP Morgan Cyber Grants, SPA Capital Services Limited, KLeeto, The British Asian Trust, Korean Embassy, Tides Foundation (Google), MCKS Foods for Hungry Foundation, Vidya Foundation, Morgan Stanley, Winkisan, Mukul Consultants I Private Limited, SPMCIL, Nokia India, IFCI, United Way of Mumbai, UBS, Aircel, Duraline, Western Union |
| Research and Assessment Partners | World Bank |
| School Adoption Partners | Beetel Teletech Limited, Bharti Infratel Limited, Chapman Taylor and Family, Chip Kaye and Family, Deutsche Bank, FieldFresh Foods Private Limited, Kalpana Morparia, Security Printing and Miniting Corpolution of India Limited, The Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales Charitable Trust, Tides Foundation (Google), DLF Limited, Dura-Line India Private Limited, FC Sondhi Co India Private Limited, UBS Securities India Private Limited, Arburg Pincus Inc. |
| Technical Partners | Allive Education Initiative (Curriculum Consultant), Ark Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation (Curriculum Consultant), Big Tech Initiative, Centum Learning Limited (Training Consultant), Chapters India (Training Consultant), Cogent Communications, Dilip Tanwar (Education Consultant, Curriculum), Ernst & Young Foundation (Curriculum Consultant), Fauzia Umar (Individual), Gurpreet Kaur (Individual), IBM India Private Limited (Curriculum Consultant), iDiscoveri (Curriculum Consultant), Inspire Educational Development |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | Centre (Curriculum and Training Consultant), Jodogyan Educational Services (training consultant), Latika Foundation (Training consultant), Mad Rat Games, Maheshwari Hindi Officer at Southern Railways, Max Healthcare, Microsoft India Private Limited, MTS India, Mukta Saxena, Mukul Consultant I Private Limited, Nasscom Foundation, Neelam Yadav, Neha Sharma (SBSE Consultant for PEC Program), Nishu Verma, Pratham Education Initiatives (curriculum consultant), Nishu Verma, Professor Mukesh Kothi (CSBSe Consultatnt for PEC Program), Quick Heal, Rama Sen Gupta, Ravi Kant (Digantar), Room to Read, Savitri Singh (Headmistress, National Council of Education Research and Training – NCERT model school, Curriculum and Training Consultant), Seema Patel, Seem Yadav, Selvarasu – Mixed Higher Senior Secondary School (Chennai) , Shalini Kanwar, SnG Learning Solutions, Susan Thomas (TERI Trainer), Susmita Roy (Lakshmipath Singhanian Academy), Swait Roy (Lakshmipath Singhanian Academy), Udayan Care (Curriculum Consultant), Vichaar Value Education, World Bank |
| Teacher Development Partners | National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) Education, Monsanto Fund (US), Pearson Education Limited, Perspective Education, The Teacher Foundation, Western Union |

Source: (BF, 2015e)