



**Article History**

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***PhD Thesis Abstract***

**Rules Beyond the Rules: An Ethnographic Study of Informal Institutions in the Community School**

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Community School, in its day-to-day planning, operation, and management, is governed and guided by various acts/policies/laws/frameworks. The functioning of the school is operated following the state laws, which are formal/written and codified, and these rules are visible in nature. Apart from the formal rules, the school management in its functioning and operation is also dominantly governed and guided by informal and unwritten rules. These types of rules are not written but appear as a tacit agreement between school and community. Thus, taking informality as a central theme for study, I investigated how these rules are created, communicated, and continued. This study also sheds light on how informal rules interact with formal rules and focuses on the implications of such informal rules and practices.

To understand, investigate and explore the creation, communication, and continuation of informal rules and to elaborate on how informal rules interact with formal rules, the study had framed three research questions: i) How do the actors of a community school create and communicate informal rules in school, i.e., the day-to-day functioning, operation and, management of the school? ii) How do the actors of a community school embed and/or continue the practices of informal rules within school management? iii) How do informal rules performed by school actors interact with formal rules?

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This study is based on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2016 and 2018, sporadically (in and) out of my study area, in Manpur Village of Kaveri District. This study sheds light on unwritten social/cultural/customary rules and practices related to generating resources, proper management and coordination among staff, and students, the involvement of stakeholders in school activities, and the way they are created, communicated, and enforced in ‘formal’ school setting.

To understand the creation and communication of informal rules, the study focuses on the strong sense of togetherness, shared vision, and mission of community people towards the school, i.e., the gemeinschaftian values of school actors. It also focuses on the intent of an individual in performing the informal acts and establishes that ‘to do or not to do’ the act is an intentionally chosen individual action and choice. The intention of school actors had been driven by the individual notion of ‘doing good’.

To investigate the continuation of the informal practices to address the second research question: How do the actors of a community school embed and/or continue the practices of informal rules within school management? Capital, social reciprocity, and clientele relations of individuals are important to continue the informal practices. The study highlights trust as one of the essential elements for school actors as the basis for the continuation of informal practices.

To explicate the interaction of informal rules/practices with formal rules, the study observed informal rules either play complementary, accommodating, substantive, and/or competing roles with formal rules.

It is important to recognize the informal practices which have lubricated the formal system of school functioning and management. The study depicts informal practices adopted by the selected school to a large extent had not only found a conducive and creative way(s) of doing things, but also these practices had been effective means in obtaining desired results and securing sufficient responsiveness when identifying the objectives (of the school) to be achieved; the study concludes the consideration of such informal means and practices. The study is focused on the school; thus, it could hold the attention of policymakers, scholars, and academicians to acknowledge informal means because of its know-how of getting things done in a context such as schools.

**Keywords:** *school management, unwritten rules, informality, gemeinschaftian values*