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Organizational Sense-making and Enactment: Public Policy and Change-making of Private Professional College Administrations in Kerala, India

Biju A. Chittuparamban
Seton Hall University

ORGANIZATIONAL SENSEMAKING AND ENACTMENT: PUBLIC POLICY AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS IN KERALA, INDIA

BY

BIJU A. CHITTUPARAMBAN

Dissertation Committee

Rebecca Cox, PhD, Mentor

Rong Chen, PhD, Committee Member

Niall Hegarty, EdD, Committee Member

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Doctoral Candidate, **Biju A. Chittuparamban,** has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ph.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2013**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:
Dr. Rebecca Cox 3/16/2013

Committee Member:
Dr. Rong Chen 3/11/2013

Committee Member:
Dr. Niall Hegarty Niall Hegarty 3/11/2013

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

Abstract

The ACT of 2004 and amendments regulated student admission practices and tuition fee structure of private self-financing professional colleges in Kerala. Administrators of these private colleges engaged in organizational sensemaking as an effort to manage change enforced by the state policy. In order to explore the organizational sensemaking and responses of these college administrators to the ACT of 2004 and amendments, this dissertation focused on the case of one private self-financing professional college in Kerala and its responses to state policy mandates.

In order to understand the responses of the college to the 2004 legislation and its amendments, I used a qualitative approach and collected data through interviews with nine top administrators of the college. These interviewees belonged to the governing board of the college and chosen based on the number of years on the governing board and with different professional backgrounds. A document analysis that examined college documents and judicial records connected with the legal approaches of the college to the ACT of 2004 and amendments, also provided information on the organizational sensemaking and responses of the college to state policy.

The research shows the identity of the college shaping organizational sensemaking and enactment of the responses of the college administrators to state policy. Understanding of the organizational identity enabled college administrators to enact autonomy of the college, though greater political pressure forced the college to compromise autonomy from 2012. The study also highlights the organizational efforts of

the college administrators on *sensebuilding* around socially acceptable and equitable state policy for self-financing professional education in Kerala and alternative approaches to financial aid for students from low income groups.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Teaching in post-graduate and doctoral programmes and research will be oriented towards applied fields so as to establish relevance, need-based specialization and market-driven skill generation."
(Planning Commission,[1] 9th Five-Year Plan, 1997-2002)

"The key issue in technical and management education during the Tenth Plan would be a continuing focus on increasing intake.."
(Planning Commission, 10th Five-Year Plan, 2002-2007)

"The accelerated growth of our economy has already created shortages of high-quality technical manpower...During the Eleventh Plan, intake of technical education institutions needs to grow at an estimated 15% annually, to meet the skilled manpower needs of our growing economy."
(Planning Commission, 11th Five-Year Plan, 2007-2012)

The Republic of India organizes the planned development of the country through Five-Year Plans which state the goals, policies, instruments, and resources that guide the growth process at federal and state levels of the country. Headed by the Prime Minister, the Planning Commission of India sets the developmental agenda of the nation and outlines its implementation and evaluation framework with wider consultations with policy makers, experts, and the public (Agarwal, 2012). Therefore, these Five-Year Plan documents are significant indicators of the developmental goals and strategic action plans for national growth and tools to understand and explain the nature and mode of such growth trajectory.

[1] The Republic of India has the Planning Commission, with the Prime Minister being its Chairman, to design and implement its planned development. Five-Year plan documents indicate the priorities of each period and the fund allocation. The current plan is the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) and the two previous ones are Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007) and the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002).

The statements quoted above, excerpted from the three latest Five-Year Plan documents, indicate a consistent goal for higher education change and expansion in India, namely, to create a large pool of technically skilled citizens. With India adopting a liberalized economy from the beginning of the 1990's, a skilled labor population became the essential driving force for economic growth that required massive changes in a higher education system that overemphasized "Arts, Commerce, and Science" (ACS) education with enrollment in ACS reaching 82.04 percent in 2005 (Agarwal, 2009). The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), therefore, set producing a greater number of skilled workers as a major higher education goal and recommended higher education institutions and policy makers to institute programs and advance research in applied disciplines (Planning Commission, 1997).

The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007) acknowledged the momentum in student demand for technical and management education and focused on increasing institutional capacity. Besides increasing professional education enrollment capability of public and aided colleges through increased government funding and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), the Tenth Plan promoted private investors to establish and administer private universities and colleges (Planning Commission, 2002). The latest Plan (2007-2012) committed to higher economic advancement of the country and demanded higher education to provide additional human resource with high quality technical and management knowledge. This Five-Year Plan also projected a 15 percent enrollment increase in professional education and continued to rely more on private stakeholders to achieve the objective (Planning Commission, 2007). Thus recent Five-Year Plan statements on higher education in India showed a heavy emphasis on professional education and reliance on private investment for institutional and enrollment expansion.

Given the consistent focus on the role of professional/technical education over the past 15 years, access to and enrollment in professional and technical education accelerated. The number of professional colleges rose from 3,775 in 2000 to 10,515 in 2007 showing a 178 percent growth in the number of institutions (Agarwal, 2009). These

Table 1

Professional Education Institutions

Institutions	1999-2000	2006-2007	Percentage increase	Private share %
Colleges	3,775	10,515	178	80

Agarwal (2009), p. 88.

numbers also indicate the extend of private investment in higher education. Agarwal (2009) suggests that in 2007 80 percent of the professional colleges belonged to private investors. In the overall higher education landscape, private self-financing colleges increased from 42.6 percent in 2001 to 63.21 percent in 2006, and their enrollment changed from 32.89 percent to 51.53 percent during this period (Planning Commission, 2007). As the above numbers indicate, private investment in higher education expanded the number of institutions and enrollment capability of higher education in India and operates more institutions and educates more students in the country compared to public colleges.

Public colleges and universities in India are established and administered by either the federal or state government and these institutions operate with the allocation of funds from their respective governments. Co-existing with public institutions of higher education in India were private colleges that received state funds for administrative costs and faculty salary, and these colleges came to be known as "aided" or "grant-in-aid" colleges (Tilak, 1999; Azad, 2008). These public and publicly aided colleges, operating with public funds and under greater state and federal control, educate students with a minimal tuition fee. In contrast, the new private colleges, known as self-financing colleges, operate with private funds and depend largely on tuition fees for operation. As a result, these institutions charge higher tuition compared to public and aided colleges. Therefore, the federal policy initiatives to expand higher education, especially professional education, and to encourage private investment in self-financing model has changed the higher education landscape in India. The private sector has become the vast majority, and more and more students in the country pay high tuition for higher education. For instance, students in public engineering colleges in Kerala pay 4000 rupees as the annual academic fee (GECT, 2013), whereas those in self-financing colleges give 75,000 to 99,000 (KCECMA, 2012; Government of Kerala, 2012).[2]

A significant feature of the growth of the private sector in Indian higher education has been the acceleration in professional education. The emphasis of the latest Five-Year Plan is to increase the enrollment capacity in professional and technical education and student demand provided the surge for private stakeholders to invest in professional

[2] Colleges under Kerala Catholic Engineering College Managements' Association have uniform fee structure for all students and have fixed 75,000 as the annual academic fee, whereas other self-financing colleges that have agreed with the state government on differential fee structure charge 99,000 from students in management seats and only 35,000 from students in government seats.

colleges. According to the Planning Commission of India (2011), four-fifths of enrollment in professional education occurs in the private sector and 80 percent of professional colleges are operated by the private sector (Agarwal, 2009). Among professional degree programs, engineering has been the fastest growing discipline in India, and the available data on this growing discipline validate the dominant role of the private sector in advancing the development of a skilled labor force (Table 2).

Table 2

Growth of Engineering Colleges in India

Type	1947	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006	2007
Govt & Aided	42	111	135	142	164	202	212	215
Private	2	3	4	15	145	467	1,299	1,402
Total	44	114	139	157	309	669	1,511	1,617

Source: Agarwal (2009), p. 89.

These data also illustrate the impact of the federal policy changes that encouraged private investment for higher education expansion. Though the investment of the government in engineering education shows a consistent growth, private sector investment in engineering education has come to dominate the discipline. Such dominant performance of the private sector in engineering education came about with an array of stakeholders, including corporates, religious and family trusts, and entrepreneurs making significant investment (Agarwal, 2009).

The phenomenal growth in private self-financing professional education presented new regulatory challenges to federal and state agencies. The federal government insisted on formulating balanced policies that would both drive private investment further and institute proper regulations (Planning commission, 2011). Most of the policies of the federal and state agencies and affiliating universities have focused on approving colleges, determining the curriculum, and maintaining academic standards (Agarwal, 2009), and the management of the college rested with the college administrators.

The dramatic increase in self-financing colleges over the past two decades has been accompanied by concerns about corrupt and unethical practices in these colleges' operation. Fraudulent admission practices (Gnanam, 2008; Agarwal, 2009), inferior infrastructure and instructional quality (Gupta, 2007; Altbach and Mathews, 2010), commercialization of education through exorbitant fee structure (Singh and Mishra, 2008; Gnanam, 2008; Stella, 2008; Pal, 2008; Agarwal, 2009), and inappropriate profit-making approaches (Gnanam, 2008; Agarwal, 2009; Altbach and Mathews, 2010) were rampant in some of these private sector colleges. Professional colleges exploited the demand for professional degrees, collecting large sums of money as capitation fee or donation for admission (Gnanam, 2008; Singh and Mishra, 2008; Stella, 2008; Agarwal, 2009). These college management issues, the exploitation of student demand, and the absence of adequate public accountability mechanisms obliged the state governments to formulate regulatory policies, especially to manage private self-financing colleges.

The rapid expansion of private self-financing colleges began in the southern states of India, and Andhra Pradesh, one of the southern states, first passed the self-financing colleges' regulatory law in 1983. To maintain the quality of education, the law required all private self-financing colleges to admit students based on academic merit and in the case of professional education based on their score in the common entrance examination. This law also abolished the practice of capitation fees or donations for admission to the college to check unethical practices of commercializing education (Agarwal, 2009). Both these mandates intended to make private self-financing colleges accountable to providing quality education without exploiting for inordinate financial gain.

In 1984, the state of Karnataka passed a similar regulatory act that emulated the mandates of the Andhra Pradesh law on abolition of the capitation fee and merit-based admission practices, and introduced anew two more mandates, namely, seat sharing based on Government and Management seats and cross-subsidy or a differential fee structure. According to the seat sharing mandate, a certain percentage of seats, as determined by the state government from time to time, will be set aside as government or open merit seats, and the government allotted students to these seats based on their score in the common entrance examination. On management seats, the administrators of the college admitted students based on management priorities and academic merit. The mandate on cross-subsidy introduced a separate fee structure for government and management seats that forced college administrators to educate students admitted in government seats with a much lower tuition fee compared to students in management seats. Thus the Karnataka law, besides the effort to combat the commercialization of education and the deterioration of academic quality through the mandates on the capitation fee and merit-based admission regulation, extended government control on the administration of these colleges through the mandates on seat sharing and cross-subsidy. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, two other states in India with a large number of self-financing colleges, followed the trend and passed regulatory laws for private self-financing colleges in 1987 and 1992, respectively (Agarwal, 2009).

In the state of Kerala, the government enacted Kerala Self Financing Professional Colleges Prohibition of Capitation Fees and Procedure for Admission and Fixation of Fees Act 2004 (ACT of 2004 hereafter) to regulate the administration of private self-financing professional colleges. As the title indicates, the ACT of 2004 regulated three particular practices of these institutions. First, it established the score of the Common Entrance Test (CET) conducted by the state government as the only standard to determine the merit of the applicants for professional education in both public and private self-financing colleges in the state of Kerala. Further, the ACT of 2004 mandated fifty percent of the seats or annual student intake in self-financing colleges as government seats and authorized the Commissioner for Entrance Examinations in the state to allot students to those governments or open seats and authorized college administrators to allot merit students to only management seats. Second, it instituted cross-subsidy or differential fee structure making students in management seats pay much higher tuition fee than their classmates in government seats. Third, it prohibited private self financing professional colleges from collecting capitation fee or any other donations for admission in cash or kind (Government of Kerala, 2004). While amending the ACT of 2004, the state legislature in 2006 permitted the consortium of self-financing colleges to conduct entrance examination to determine merit for professional education if they choose not to consider the state-conducted CET. The law also required these colleges to present their annual fee structure to the state-appointed Fee Regulatory Committee for approval (Government of Kerala, 2006).

The ACT of 2004 set many private self-financing professional colleges in Kerala against the government, politicians, and policy makers and engaged in prolonged legal battles, public demonstrations, and other forms of resistance against implementing the mandates of the law. These responses of college administrators brought to the fore administrative issues arising with the implementation of the ACT of 2004, namely, the autonomy of private-self financing colleges, challenges to college mission, the role of the state in private colleges, and the nature and scope of public accountability mechanisms. The responses of these colleges also highlighted the organizational management, especially change management strategies of private self-financing colleges in the context of public accountability policies.

The existing empirical data on how these private self financing professional colleges responded to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments do not shed light on the role of organizational autonomy in framing responses to the ACT of 2004, the impact of the ACT of 2004 on college management, the role of college mission in defining responses to the ACT of 2004, and the impact of organizational change management approaches of these colleges on the ACT 0f 2004 and its amendments. Legal files and judgments from the court constitute most of the available data on responses of colleges to the state regulatory law. These data show that some minority colleges challenged the law as violating their constitutional rights to establish and administer institutions of their choice (Chief Executive Trustee *vs* The State of Kerala 2006). Self financing colleges reported on their websites the status of their compliance with policy mandates and the corresponding college practices. Many media reports stated the negative and positive responses of private self financing colleges to the ACT of 2004 and the series of discussions and negotiations the government and private self financing professional colleges held to sort out the differences. These legal documents, college data, and the media reports suggested differences in the responses of these colleges to the state policy. This available information only provides knowledge about those mandates of the policy that private self financing colleges implemented and those challenged, the rationale for challenging the policy in the court, and the organizational responses these colleges adopted. But these data do not explore the perspectives of the college administrators on their organizational change management, on specific responses to the ACT of 2004, and the impact of the state policy on organizational autonomy and management.

Studies on how self financing professional colleges responded to the state policy, the process of change management, and the impact of the policy implementation on college mission, practices, and administration, the educational implications of the policy, and the relationship of the policy and implementation on the educational environment would develop data-based empirical knowledge and understanding on proper and proactive policy making. Such broad-based knowledge related to the highly demanded and vastly expanding professional education would be a critical contribution to college administration, public policy making, and quality education.

To understand the organizational change management strategy and organizational responses of self-financing colleges to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I conducted a study of one self-financing professional college. Specifically, I chose to investigate how one self-financing engineering college responded to the ACT of 2004 and how the implementation of the policy impacted the mission and administration. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What do the college administrators describe as their organization's initial responses to the ACT of 2004? How have their responses to the ACT of 2004 evolved over time?

2. How did the college administrators construct organizational responses to state regulatory policy on self financing professional colleges?

3. How do the college administrators understand the impact of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments on the mission of the institution?

The Study

To explore the organizational change strategies in-depth and to understand the responses to and the perspectives of the administrators on the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I chose one private self financing engineering college (the college hereafter) that allowed the administrators to frame knowledge and frame it within their own organizational context. Semi-structured interviews with nine administrators of the college served as the primary data collection strategy as I sought to understand the perspectives of the college administrators as educational practitioners on the ACT of 2004 as an educational policy. These perspectives provided management insights on the impacts and implications of the state policy for private college management. Further, court verdicts to cases filed by the college against the ACT of 2004 and amendments, mandatory disclosures posted on the college website, and printed admission brochures provided additional information and clarification. These diverse data enabled me to understand and analyze the meaning these administrators constructed about the policy, the organizational threat posed by the policy, and the responses they formed to accept the policy in selected cases, and reject and challenge others as they addressed organizational change demands.

Significance of the Study

Beginning in the 1990s, and continuing through the three latest Five-Year Plans (1997-2012), higher education in India has undergone structural reforms through development-oriented and skill-based educational goals and policy directives, and creating a private-friendly investment environment (Tilak 1999; Varghese 2004; Varghese 2009). These changes in the educational policy environment also drastically changed the higher education landscape in India with the higher education Gross Enrollment Ratio[3] (GER) improving from 4.95 in 1990 to 15.2 percent in 2007 and reaching 20.2 percent in 2012 (Agarwal, 2012). About half of this incremental enrollment came with greater private participation in establishing large numbers of self financing colleges and engaging in partnership with public colleges (Planning commission, 2007). These changes reflect the defining phase of the transition of higher education in India from elite to a mass system (Trow, 2001; Agarwal, 2012) and the predominant role of the private sector in shaping this transition. Therefore, understanding this dominant stakeholder in higher education explores the nature and scope of the higher education transition and the future of tertiary education in India.

In the study of the organizational responses of private professional colleges in Kerala to the ACT of 2004, this research contributes, besides exploring the process of

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[3] UNESCO defines Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) as a nation's total enrollment in a specific level of education, stated as a percentage of the population corresponding to the same age corresponding to the level of education. In the case of India, it refers to the GER corresponding to the age group of 18-23.

privatization in Indian higher education, to the understanding of the global landscape of private higher education. Private stakeholders and institutions have become predominant agents for global tertiary education institutional growth and enrollment increase (Levy, 2008). Therefore, exploring the nature of this private participation in higher education contributes to knowledge in this domain and identifies perspectives, practices, and performance of private higher education worldwide.

In this qualitative research on the responses of private colleges to state regulation, I explore the postsecondary education policy making process in India. Large numbers of private self financing colleges in India emerged with the policy changes that favored liberalization in economy and increasing private participation in service sectors. Besides, the rapid expansion of private higher education, especially in professional education, required effective accountability policies to regulate these institutions. Therefore, understanding the ACT of 2004 as a public policy and exploring the trajectory of its evolution over the years from 2004 to 2012 allow for probing the process of policy making and policy changes in the domain of professional education and private higher education in India. Again, exploring the perspectives of the college administrators on public policy contributes to creating knowledge about and for reforming educational policy and policy making based on contextual and pragmatic understanding of the policy mandates and implications.

A significant aspect of this research consists of understanding the impact of public policy on private higher education accountability. The ACT of 2004 and later amendments were expected to regulate private self financing professional colleges in Kerala and to establish accountability standards both in the domains of academic and financial administration of these colleges. Therefore, exploring the responses of these colleges' administrators to the ACT of 2004 and amendments brings to the fore the role of public policy in making private self financing colleges administratively accountable to the government, students, and the society. In the study, I also probe the broad outcomes of the public policy, especially at the intra and inter-organizational levels of private self-financing colleges and the understanding and responses of policy makers at the state level.

Technical education received the top policy priority in higher education developmental goals and plans as all the Five-Year Plans of India from 1997 onward focused on generating a skilled labor force to strengthen the economy and develop the country (Planning Commission, 2007). With 80 percent of professional colleges and four-fifths of enrollment in profession education occurring in the private sector (Planning Commission, 2011), the quality of these colleges and their graduates would determine the quality of the labor force and their role in strengthening the economy of the country. This need for quality emphasizes the crucial role of public regulatory policies that shape the critical contributions of private self financing professional colleges to the society. Therefore, examining these public policies that shape professional education in private colleges could enhance the effectiveness of accountability laws and the quality of educational services at private self-financing institutions.

Evolving mutually acceptable and effective accountability regulations at the early stages of the transition from mass to universal education, from 20.2 percent in 2012 to 25 percent by 2017 (Planning Commission, 2011; Agarwal, 2012), would make private higher education in India manageable with the vast increment in the number of colleges and enrollment expected. Better accountability policies and evidence-based research on formation, effectiveness, and impact of public policies on colleges and formation of college-based mechanisms would guide the establishment and management of private self-financing colleges at the very evolutionary stage of its growth.

The massive private investment, especially in professional degree programs, has brought entrepreneurship, innovation, and competitiveness to higher education management, service delivery, and outcomes. The innovative character of these colleges brings flexibility and customer service focus into college and university management while the existing system of public and aided colleges with heavy bureaucratic and affiliating structures resist innovation and changes (Agarwal, 2009; Pal, 2009). Therefore, researchers who analyze the impact of regulatory policies on colleges and understand the perspectives of the college administrators on policies contribute to refine policies to maintain the competitive and innovative character of these private colleges. In this study of the responses of a private self-financing professional college to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments and the perspectives of the college administrators on the impact of the policy on organizational management and the objectives of the college, I intend to provide knowledge that refines and reframes regulatory policies.

Therefore, understanding how the ACT of 2004 is framed as a self financing college regulatory law, the ideology and objectives that guided such policy formation, the responses of private college management toward the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, impact of the policy on colleges, and the impact of college administrators on policy changes would create knowledge on college autonomy, effective and balanced accountability mechanisms for the private sector, policy mandates and college administration, and policy reforms. Therefore, in this qualitative study I examine the perspectives of the administrators of one private self financing engineering college on the ACT of 2004 as a regulatory policy, their organizational change management approach, and their responses to the policy mandates.

Background of the College

The college where I conducted this study belonged to Lourdes Matha Catholic Educational Society (referred as "Educational Society" hereafter). Lay members of a Catholic parish, located in the southern part of Kerala, founded the Educational Society to establish the engineering college when the state government enacted the educational policy introducing self financing colleges in professional education (The college, 2012). The college is not a direct initiative of the local parish or the diocese, but it was founded and is administered by a lay-board. Yet, the Educational Society and the college identify closely with the Catholic community and its leadership. The local bishop is the patron of the college, and the local pastor is the ex-officio president of college Governing Board (The college, 2012).

The Educational Society, registered as a charitable society and functioning as a not-for-profit organization, founded the college in 2002 as a self financing college for undergraduate engineering programs and later began hotel management, MBA, MCA, and M-Tech courses. The college received approval from All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the federal statutory body that oversees technical education in the country in 2002 and is affiliated with the University of Kerala for academic curriculum and granting of degrees. The institution offers undergraduate engineering programs in computer science, electronics and communication, information technology, electrical and electronics, and mechanical engineering with a composite total of 420 seats per year. The college admits 60 students for the MCA program each year and another 60 for a master's in business administration. From 2012-2013 academic year, the college offers master's in technology in two disciplines (applied electronics and instrumentation engineering & computer science engineering) with 18 seats in each discipline (The college, 2012a). These data explain the academic development of the college and the academic programs and services offered by the educational society.

A 25 member governing board is the highest administrative decision making authority of the college. These governing board members, chosen from the members of the educational society that owns the college, serve on the board for a period of three years. The president, vice-president, secretary, joint-secretary, and treasurer of the governing board constitute the board of governors that conducts the day-to-day administration of the educational society for the governing board. A director, appointed by the governing board, is the chief administer of the college, whereas the principal coordinates and conducts the academic administration. A seven-member executive committee, consisting of the board of governors, director, and principal of the college, functions as the liaison between the governing board and the college administration and meets every month to coordinate the administrative work. Another 23-member academic advisory committee that consists of members of the governing board, director, principal, and the head of the departments, state and university representatives, and experts meets once a year to coordinate the academic programs of the college (The college, 2013). These different administrative bodies of the college function with autonomy and in coordination with one another to provide expertise and efficiency to college administration.

The next chapter discusses the history of private higher education in India and the literature on organizational sensemaking which I used as the theoretical framework to understand how the administrators of the catholic college made sense of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments and how such organizational behavior, when challenged by the state policy mandate, shaped organizational responses.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter covers the literature on private higher education in India and organizational sensemaking, the theoretical framework of the study. The review of the literature on private higher education in India begins with a brief outline of the global landscape of privatization of higher education and examines the nature of the evolution of private higher education in India. This section of the review also examines the higher education accountability framework in India and explores the background of the ACT of 2004 as public accountability policy measure for professional education. The second section of the chapter expounds organizational sensemaking after situating Karl Weick's theory within the larger organizational decision-making context.

History of Private Higher Education in India

The private sector is the fastest growing and innovative segment in the global higher education landscape. The last quarter of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century witnessed a greater surge in privatization and in some countries private institutions outnumber the public sector (Agarwal, 2009). The United States has been the champion of private higher education and some of the best research universities in the world are the US private institutions even though the enrollment in its private sector is around 20 percent. Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines have been traditionally promoting private involvement in higher education and enroll almost 80 percent of the total student population (Altbach, 2005a), and countries like Brazil, Mexico, and Chile have around 50 percent enrollment in the private sector

(Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2010). A well-regulated and highly encouraged private sector in these countries has contributed substantially to their human capital and national development.

Analyzing the recent explosion of the private sector in higher education, Levy (2006) argues that an abundance of choices and various national and economic constraints have contributed to the formation of diverse forms of private institutions, and Altbach (1999) contents that institutional diversity can differ based on national variations of these choices and constraints. One of the most significant factors that paved the way for the rapid expansion of the private sector is the economic slowdown of the 1980s that forced many nations, especially the developing countries, to reduce state financing of public services and encourage private participation (Varghese, 2004). The direct impact of these policy changes on higher education consists in reduced public fund for public institutions, more public-private partnerships (PPP), and promotion of private initiatives in higher education sector on a self-financing basis. Praphamontripong (2010) associates this change to the shift from state ideology to market ideology that emphasizes competition, liberalization, and market-driven globalization that most of the developing nations adapted for efficient financial management and better national growth. India also experienced phenomenal growth in private higher education, and the next section of the chapter examines the historical development of private higher education in India.

The emergence of private higher education in India can be traced historically in three phases, the Foundational Stage (Pre-independence era), Nationalization Stage (Post-independence era until 1980), and Privatization Stage (the Period from 1980 to the present). The division of the development of private higher education in India based on these stages underlines the predominant educational characteristic of private sector colleges.

Foundational Stage

The modern university system in India began with the British colonial administration establishing universities in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai in 1857 based on the London model of an affiliating university and affiliated colleges. These universities, established in the provincial headquarters of the colonial administration, affiliated colleges within a geographical area and controlled the curriculum, conducted examinations, and awarded degrees. At the time of independence in 1947, Indian higher education consisted of 25 universities and 500 colleges[4] (Agarwal, 2009). At this period, the affiliated colleges operated by private investors were regulated by the affiliating universities (Jayaram, 2004) that maintained academic standards through setting curriculum and examining the performance of the students, and they accorded the college the autonomy in administration.

The colonial colleges, those established and supported by the colonial administration, were few and educated only a few wealthy Indians to be drafted into the colonial administrative service (Chitnis, 1999; Gupta, 2005). Many socio-religious organizations and philanthropists established private colleges to provide educational services to the advancement of the underserved groups (CBCI, 2006) and rural population (Powar and Bhalla, 2008). Private higher education during the pre-independence period relied on tuition fees, philanthropy, church-related foundations or

[4] The Ninth Five-year Plan document puts this number as 27 universities and 370 colleges.

religious orders or dioceses in the country or abroad, and corporations for financial support to establish and administer educational institutions (Tilak, 1999; Levy, 2008; Gupta, 2008; Agarwal, 2009). Thus private colleges in the pre-independence period enjoyed greater autonomy in management, though the affiliating university regulated the academic standards.

Nationalization Stage

The post-independence period of Indian higher education witnessed a massive expansion and in three years the number of colleges increased from 500 to 700[5], and majority of the universities were public affiliating institutions and the majority of the affiliated colleges were private institutions (Jayaram, 2004; Agarwal, 2009). A significant development of this period consisted of the state financing of higher education or what Agarwal (2009) calls the *nationalization* of private higher education. In an effort to make a welfare state, the governments (both central and state) supported the financial cost of the private higher education sector as these colleges were called as Grant-In Aid (GIA) institutions or aided institutions. Under this scheme, any private college, approved and recognized by University Grants Commission, received operational and administrative costs from the government. The state financial assistance enabled private colleges to bring down the tuition fees to the level with government colleges. These colleges levied only a small amount from the students as library fees, admission fee, or development fee. By 1980 nearly one-third of the total numbers of affiliated colleges

[5] Different authors suggest various numbers for these years concerning the number of universities and colleges. Chitnis (1999) states that there were 21 universities in 1947 but Jayaram (2004) puts 20 as the number of universities and 636 as the number of colleges in 1947 and Agarwal (2009) refers to 25 universities and 500 colleges at independence. These authors show the lack of clarity concerning the historical data on higher education in India, which hampers the research efforts and at the same time reminds of the need for more research to provide specificity on these data.

(4,738) were private aided institutions (Gnanam, 2002; Stella, 2008; Agarwal, 2009) and the private sector comprised 57 per cent of the total higher education system this time (Gupta, 2008).

The grant in aid policy as a cost recovery practice influenced the institutional autonomy and mission of private colleges. These institutions came under greater government control and accountability, and the demand to admit students based on the government merit list, and to follow the affirmative action policies of the government and institute the level of reservation for students from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. This government funding enforced state control on these institutions and institutions forfeited their autonomy related to establishment, mission, and function (Levy, 1992). The practice of grants-in-aid also impacted the pattern of philanthropic contribution to the private higher education sector, as it diminished from 11.62 per cent in 1951 to as little as 2.74 per cent by the end of 2004 (Kapur and Mehta, 2004).

Privatization Stage

Private higher education entered a new stage in the 1980s when the federal government encouraged increased private participation in public service sectors as a strategy to overcome the economic crisis. Tilak (1999) observes three forms of privatization that emerged in Indian higher education from the 1980s: privatization of the system through an increased number of private institutions and stagnant or declining number of public institutions, privatization of the existing public sector by transferring the management to private trusts, and privatization of the institutions through increased private financing as a cost recovery measure or public-private partnerships (PPP). These efforts to increase the private investment in higher education coincided with the economic recovery and the strengthening of the efforts of the government.

The government of India planned for an increase in Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)[6] in higher education to support the economic growth and to meet the overwhelming student demand in the country. In 1990, India's higher education GER was only 4.95 percent and the country planned to achieve 20 percent enrollment toward the end of 2012 (Planning commission of India, 1997; 2007; Agarwal, 2009). Such a transition from an elite to a mass system of higher education (Trow, 2001) demanded tough and bold policy decisions and changes in higher education structures. Altbach (2005) found many countries expanding the existing private sector participation and others deregulating the higher education structure to introduce privatization to meet enrollment demand. India's structural reforms in higher education focused on lowering public financing of private aided colleges, initiating more self-financing colleges, and deregulating the education sector for more private investments from national and global education providers (Tilak, 1999; Varghese, 2004; Varghese, 2009).

Many researchers and government reports, starting from the last quarter of the twentieth century, suggested structural reforms and increased private participation in Indian higher education. National Policy on Education (1986) called for mobilizing non-public resources to finance higher education. The 8th Five-Year plan document (1993-1997) encouraged participation of voluntary agencies and private investors to expand higher education enrollment (Planning Commission, 1993). In 1997, the Ministry of

[6] UNESCO defines Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) as a nation's total enrollment in a specific level of education, stated as a percentage of the population corresponding to the same age corresponding to the level of education. In the case of India, it refers to the GER corresponding to the age group of 18-23.

Finance argued that the benefits to individuals justify a tuition hike in public and publicly funded colleges (Government of India, 1997). The Prime Minister's Special Action Plan for Education (1998) suggested a review of government policies to remove hindrances and encourage more private participation to provide quality and cost effective higher education. The 9th Five-Year plan (1997-2002) reiterated the previous plan's objective to attract more private investment and increase higher education enrollment (Planning Commission, 1997). The Ambani and Birla Commission report (2000)[7] proposed policy reforms to invite more private enterprisers to invest in higher education and the 10th Five-Year Plan (2002-2007) showed a commitment to this effort suggesting modernization and simplification of laws, rules, and procedures to promote private investors to start universities, colleges, and schools (Planning Commission, 1999). The 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) emphasized maintaining the pace in promoting private investment in higher education (Planning Commission of India, 2007). The authors of all these studies suggested the consistent policy standpoint of the government of India and the educational experts that promoted private participation for higher education expansion and enrollment growth.

Federal and state governments changed the higher education structures at both the national and state levels based on the objectives of the Five-Year Plans and the higher education demands in the country. The Federal government introduced Private Universities Act and Foreign Universities Act in the Parliament to allow Indian nationals and foreign investors respectively, to establish and administer universities in India

[7] Ambani and Birla are two private entrepreneurs in India who were appointed by the government and the repost of the commission titled "A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education" was submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry.

(Agarwal, 2009). Meanwhile, many state governments passed legislation that approved establishing private universities (Agarwal, 2009) that increased the number of institutions and the gross enrollment ratio in higher education. Many such private investments concentrated heavily in professional education. Thus the number of professional colleges increased from 3,775 in 2000 to 10,515 in 2007, and 80 percent of them were private colleges (Agarwal, 2009). Such phenomenal growth of private professional colleges reflected the emphasis of the government on producing a skilled workforce (Kaul, 2006; Varghese, 2004; Planning Commission, 2002) and student demand based on an employment market (Altbach, 2005).

Diverse stakeholders, including philanthropists, religious groups, trusts, societies, individuals, corporations, and families invested in higher education (Tilak, 1999; Gupta, 2005) and provided institutional and program diversity (Levy, 2008; Levy, 2006; Tilak, 1999). They were entrepreneurial in nature with flexible class times, part-time courses, and the admittance of non-traditional students (Levy, 2008); and they were efficient in financial management with fewer staff, more part-time faculty, and greater institutional control (Clark, 1998). Thus private investment revolutionized higher education in India and proved detrimental to the national growth through the development of a skilled work force.

Central and state governments, national policy makers, educationists and educational administrators regard private participation essential for higher education expansion. All the three planning commission documents from 1977 to 2007 show consistent emphasis on private participation for the expansion of higher education. In an interview study, conducted in 2002, Azad (2008) probed the perspectives of diverse educational experts, including academicians, vice-chancellors, policy makers, and industrialists on privatization in higher education and discovered these experts favoring such investments in establishing self financing colleges, private universities, and partnering with public colleges and universities. Azad reported the interviewees suggested simplification of the laws and norms to create an investment-friendly environment in the nation's higher education. As reflected in the Five-Year Plan documents, Azad also found educational experts and practitioners concerned about the commercialization of education and suggesting proper regulatory mechanisms.

In 2009, Yash Pal submitted to the federal government the report of a federally commissioned study conducted through individual and focus-group interviews and meetings with vice-chancellors, college administrators, faculty, and students. In his elaborate study that gathered data from almost 1,000 people, Yah Pal examined the higher education context in India with the view to suggest ideas for its rejuvenation. Exploring the nature of privatization in Indian higher education, the researcher found private investors increasing higher education enrollment but also discovered some private self financing colleges engaging in unethical practices, both in academic and financial administration of colleges. Pal and his team discovered government and university policies and the approach of university administrators and regulatory bodies deterring the investment efforts of some well-intentioned private stakeholders. One of the significant policy recommendations by these investigators was in creating a single regulatory agency for higher education with the view to lessen the negative impact of multiple regulatory bodies on both public and private colleges. Though the authors of this commissioned study conducted elaborate data collection and analysis, they lacked a specific theoretical framework and covered the higher education context in India in its entirety. Such a broad research approach affected knowledge generation and limited the inquiry to gathering minimal data on multiple aspects of the higher education landscape in India.

Self-financing colleges became the predominant investment type of private stakeholders in India, and Singh and Mishra (2008) examined the diverse models of self-Self-financing colleges and found manipal,[8] marketing, sponsoring, and franchising as the four prominent models. Singh and Mishra synthesized the extant body of knowledge on these types of private colleges without engaging in empirical research or systematic analysis of the literature. The approach of the authors to put together available information on this most vibrant stakeholder in higher education established knowledge on institutional diversity and administrative innovation of these colleges.

In limited studies, researchers have probed the academic quality and performance of higher education institutions in the country. Powar and Stable (1995) studied about the engineering colleges affiliated to a public university in the Western region of the country and found government colleges having a better score, followed by colleges established by socially committed cooperatives. Self financing colleges, most of which are founded by politicians or other entrepreneurs, achieved very low score in student performance and graduation rate. The authors of this study gathered data from ten institutions belonging to a single university that could provide a better understanding of the region, but the situation in other regions or states could be different and require

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[8] Manipal model refers to self-financing colleges pioneered by the Manipal Academy of Higher Education that provided higher education opportunities to those who could pay for education (Singh and Sharma, 2008).

further inquiry. Later the University of Kerala (2008) reported the average graduation rate of its affiliated engineering colleges: public colleges had the highest rate at 67.3 percent, self financing colleges together averaged 35.6 percent and the private self financing colleges separately averaged only 10-15 percent. Though public professional colleges in the country attract the academically well prepared students which helps to explain their higher graduation rate in comparison with self financing colleges, the authors of these studies and reports fail to account for the relationships between entry level academic merit and the graduation rate or the relationship between entry level merit, academic quality of the college, and the graduation rate.

Access to higher education, especially to professional education that is on high demand and maintains rigorous standards, has been discussed recently in many academic and policy circles. Ajith Kumar et al. (1997) examined the trend in the enrollment of students in professional courses in Kerala and found that students from the upper middle income and high income category were enrolled more in self-financing courses than in regular courses. Moreover, low and lower middle income groups, which account for 95 percent of the households in Kerala, accounted for only 20 percent of the enrollment in public and self financing courses in engineering. In their study, the investigators had 223 student participants from different professional courses and the researchers relied on the information given by the participants even though they suspected a certain level of underestimation of the household income in participant reporting. These researchers also found professional education, both in public and private self financing colleges, favoring the urban population due to better academic preparedness and entrance coaching facilities.

Arora (2000) found cost sharing patterns and policies shifting the burden of education away from tax payers to students and parents and affecting the educational opportunities of students from low-income groups. Due to the absence of reliable data, Arora interviewed 30 government officials and college administrators to assess the education access issue and the expertise of these officials at policy making and implementation at government and college levels to give the data more authenticity. The researcher covered one metropolitan town in the north and a few college administrators.

Bhushan (2008) examined the demographic background of students seeking self-financing courses and found those pursuing such courses had better educated parents and annual household income over 100,000 rupees. These courses educate students mostly from middle and upper middle income families. With the data from 27 universities and 36 colleges and covering 622 programs of study across universities and 211 programs in colleges, Bhushan covered a wide range of data from institutions across all regions of the country. A similar pattern exists in Kerala as better economic background, educated parents, and urban background favored students in access to professional education, especially in public colleges (Ajith Kumar and et al., 1997). Thus available data on or about access to higher education indicate higher education opportunities, especially in profession disciplines, favor those with greater economic and social power, and education grants become the important catalyst for higher education opportunities of the low income groups.

Bhushan (2008) examined the prize of higher education across the country with the assumption that higher differentiation between colleges produces less competition and less differentiation propels higher levels of competition and eventually an efficient fee structure. Bhushan (2008) found that almost 72 percent of the general courses (Arts, Science, Commerce) cost 10,000 or less rupees, whereas nearly 50 percent of technical and management courses cost 20,000 and above across the country. But the tuition fees of some courses cost much more, including BCA (1,89,028), MSc (60,766), and MCA (45,000). Bhushan argues that demand for courses only increases the tuition fee, and higher levels of competition do not result in efficient fee structure. The researcher explains that the levels of competition between self-financing colleges are weak and, therefore, an efficient fee structure is absent. Though the investigator provided significant information about the fee structure for general and self-financing courses across India, he could not explain authoritatively the fee structure of private universities due to less representation in the sample size.

Private cost, the non-academic expenses, has become higher with the the increase in self-financing courses and acts as entry barriers for students from low economic background. In a study of the private cost of medical and para-medical courses in Kerala, Ajith Kumar (2004) found subsidizing the fee component of the cost of education does not enable students from a lower income background to pursue professional education as the tuition fee consists of only a small percentage of the actual cost of education. Ajith Kumar (2004) included 163 medical students, 38 dental students, 65 nursing students and 17 pharmacy students from 5 medical colleges in Kerala and did not include students in the self-financing courses. In his study, Ajith Kumar included only the students in public colleges, and his assessment of the academic and private cost could not account for the overestimation of the data on family income and private cost of education.

The role of private stakeholders in the expansion of higher education in India has been well accounted for and emphasized over the last two decades in government and educational policies, whereas examining the impact of such prominent agents of expansion has been scarce. Powar and Bhalla (2008) examined government records and existing literature to understand the role of private higher education in the state of Maharashtra and found private self-financing colleges, especially professional colleges, catering to students from upper and upper-middle classes. The fee structure of these self-financing colleges becomes a barrier for students from low income background. But Powar and Bhalla discovered that private cooperatives that established self financing colleges in farming regions of the state adopted affirmative action strategies to educate students from the local communities that resulted in the socio-economic development of the region.

In certain cases, private stakeholders cater to specific social and religious groups in society. Forero-Pena (2004) studied the Women Christian colleges in Kerala and discovered a majority of the student population belonged to the Christian community. This researcher analyzed the data from critical theory and feminist perspectives and found college practices, regulations, and the education perpetuating the social construct that ascribed men the dominant power and accorded women subordinate roles. Though these Christian women colleges educated mostly the women from their communities, they hesitated to take up progressive thinking and educate women to form their personality and identity.

The above review of the existing literature reveals that empirical studies on higher education in India are few. Limited studies are done on higher education in general and much less on the role and impact of private colleges. Though many policy makers and educationists argue about the unethical practices and poor administration of private self-financing colleges, empirical studies to support the claim are scarce. Conspicuously absent in the literature is also empirical studies on the impact of regulatory bodies and laws on higher education institutions and their administrative and academic autonomy, even though many of these regulatory bodies have existed for decades.

Regulatory Framework in Indian Education

Private colleges in India are subjected to different levels of regulation. All colleges seek approval from state governments before establishment and are affiliated with a public affiliating university. Though the state government only grant permission to establish colleges, the affiliating university regulates the academic curriculum, examination, and granting of degrees. On professional colleges, certification from national professional agencies serves as another level of regulation. These agencies regulate technical, medical, dental, nursing, or teacher education colleges separately for academic quality and degree certification (Ahmad and Siddiqui, 2008; Agarwal, 2009).

The University Grants Commission in India, the federal agency that coordinates and determines the academic standard of higher education in the country, established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 to accredit colleges (Ahmad and Siddiqui, 2008; Aruchami and Vasuki, 2008). But the accreditation by NAAC has not been made mandatory for colleges and thus most of the colleges have not been accredited. As of 2008, only 113 universities and 2088 colleges have been accredited out of 371 universities and 18,064 colleges (Stella, 2008; Agarwal, 2009).

Ahmad and Siddiqui (2008) argue that more private colleges seek NAAC accreditation to bring legitimacy and greater appeal to applicants. The role of these regulatory agencies consists of maintaining the academic quality of these institutions and programs while the management of the colleges rested with their administrators. Such administrative freedom of private colleges has come under criticism and increased state monitoring as many self-financing colleges that provide professional education charge exorbitant tuition and other fees and admit low-quality students. States with larger number of professional colleges enacted laws to regulate especially the academic and financial administration of these institutions.

Background of the ACT of 2004

In 1983, the state of Andhra Pradesh passed the first self financing colleges regulatory law in the country. To maintain the quality of education, this law required all private colleges to admit students on academic merit determined by the state-conducted entrance examination. To regulate commercialization of education and exploitation of student demand, this government policy abolished the practice of capitation fees or donation for admission to the college. When the state of Karnataka passed a similar regulatory Act in 1984, the law added, besides the abolition of the capitation fee and the mandate for merit-based admission, a seat-sharing based on Government and Management seats. The law also instituted cross-subsidy or a differential fee structure for students admitted in Government and Management seats. The state of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu passed similar regulatory laws in 1987 and 1992, respectively (Agarwal. 2009).

Self-financing colleges from these states challenged the regulatory laws in the Supreme Court of India, and two judgments of the Supreme Court shaped further policy formation on self-financing professional colleges regulatory laws in the country. In the TMA Pia *verses* State of Karnataka (2002) judgment, the Supreme court: (1) dismissed cross-subsidy as compelling one citizen to pay for the education of another and declared state restriction on student selection and fee structure as unconstitutional. It violated the right of citizens to practice any profession, or carry on any occupation, trade or business (Article 19.1 of the Constitution); (2) decreed that in determining the fee structure of private colleges, a reasonable surplus for institutional development and expansion would be permissible.

In the case of Islamic Academy of Education *versus* State of Karnataka (2003), the Supreme Court discussed the right of the minority community to establish and administer educational institutions and the regulation of minority self financing professional colleges and ruled that: (1) minority institutions have the constitutional right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice (Article 30 (1) of the Constitution); (2) reiterated the right of private colleges to collect reasonable surplus money for the development and expansion of the institution; (3) recommended the state governments to constitute a committee headed by a retired judge of the state High Court to fix a reasonable fee structure for private professional colleges; (4) directed the state governments to regulate the student admission to professional colleges, including private colleges, on the basis of common entrance tests.

After these two Supreme Court judgments had clarified many of the contested issues related to the regulation of self-financing professional colleges, the government of

Kerala enacted the ACT of 2004 to adopt a regulatory policy for private professional colleges within the state. The law required self financing colleges to change practices on student admission and tuition fee.

In clause 3 of the ACT of 2004, the state enforced seat sharing in admission to self financing professional colleges on a 50:50 Government and Management seats. Accordingly, the Commissioner for Entrance Examinations in the state allotted students to Government seats based on their rank in the Common Entrance Test (CET). College management allotted students to Management seats based on the rank of the students in the CET or any other common entrance test conducted by the consortium of private colleges. The ACT of 2004 also authorized the management to earmark not more than 15 percent of the Management seats for dependents of Non-Resident Indians (NRI).

Clause 4 of the ACT of 2004 instituted cross-subsidy in fee structure. Students admitted to Government seats paid the same fee that corresponding students in government (public) colleges paid, and the management was authorized to fix a much higher tuition fee for students in Management seats to cover sufficiently the "inevitable expenses of running the institution" (ACT 2004). Clause 6 of the ACT of 2004 abolished the practice of capitation fee.

The ACT of 2004 mandates on seat sharing and cross-subsidy in self-financing professional colleges forced government power into college administration, though the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the autonomy of college management to administer the institution and determine college-based practices on admission and tuition fee. Many self-financing professional colleges challenged the government intervention in the administration of these colleges and approached the High Court of Kerala for protection against the policy, and the High Court declared the ACT of 2004 as unconstitutional.

In 2006, the government of Kerala introduced an amendment to self-financing professional colleges act of 2004 (ACT of 2006). The amended act introduced a clarification on minority educational institutions and a tuition fee monitoring committee. Clause 2 (l) of the ACT of 2006 defined minority as "a community belonging to a religious or linguistic minority as may be notified by Government taking the State as a unit" (ACT of 2006). Accordingly, the state government instituted three requirements to attain the status of minority college: (a) the population of the community to which the college belongs shall be less than fifty percent of the total population of the State; (b) the number of professional colleges run by the minority community shall be proportionately less than the number of professional colleges run by non-minority communities in the State; and (c) the number of students belonging to the minority community to which the college belongs and undergoing professional education in the state shall be less than the number of students belonging to the non-minority community in the State (Chief Executive Trustee *vs* The State of Kerala, 2006). The government attempted through this clarification of minority status to strip most of the private colleges of their minority status and implement the state professional education regulation.

Clause 3 of the ACT of 2006 instituted a single window system for admission into professional education in the State. Admission to both public and private professional colleges was mandated through only CET conducted by the State and followed by centralized counseling by the Commissioner for CET. Further, clause 7 required private self-financing colleges to submit the annual fee structure for approval from the state-appointed Fee Regulatory Committee (ACT of 2006).

Through the ACT of 2006, state government intended to enforce greater control on self-financing colleges. The effort to redefine the minority status of some private colleges enforced greater control on their organizational autonomy. Through the single window system for admission, the government required all students seeking professional education in the state to apply through the government agency that will allot students to public and private colleges. Such a strategy restricted the freedom of colleges and students to choose colleges of their interest. The Fee Regulatory Committee regulated the tuition fee of private professional colleges that required private self-financing colleges to negotiate their financial autonomy with the state.

The state government, through the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, intended to secure the quality of professional education and monitor and regulate the admission procedure and fee structure. Beyond these objectives, the state policies introduced priorities of the government, especially through seat-sharing based on Government and Management seats, cross-subsidy in tuition fee, and redefining the minority status of educational institutions. The responses of self-financing professional colleges to these state mandates varied based on the nature, mission, and ideologies of individual college managements. Some colleges followed the state mandate of 50:50 seat-sharing and differential tuition fee, whereas others rejected both mandates and formed separate college policies. In this qualitative study, I examine the responses of one private self-financing engineering college that rejected the government mandates and established its own college policies on admission and tuition fee.

As I probe the responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I focus on the organizational change strategies of the administrators to environmental challenges. Organizational sensemaking theorists help one to understand the strategies the administrators employed to make sense of the policy implications, organizational threats, and responses to state regulations. The next section of the chapter explores the theory of organizational sensemaking to understand the organizational decision making and change management of the college administrators.

Theoretical Framework

Organizations encounter unusual and unexpected events that do not resemble their past experiences and the approaches they adopt to address these events determine their impact on the present and future functioning of organizations (Garud, Dunbar & Bartel, 2011). Decision making becomes, therefore, a critical function of organizational leaders and actors. Researchers in organizational behavior suggest organizational actors engage in reflection and novel actions to learn or make sense of the new challenges and decide upon appropriate actions (Thomas, Sussman & Henderson, 2001; Patriotta, 2003; Tsoukas, 2009; Garud, Dunbar & Bartel, 2011).

Scholars understand organizational decision making in two ways, as a process and as a structure (Bess & Dee, 2008). Researchers, who use the process approach, conceive decision making as an incremental activity (Quinn, 1980) or occurring in a sequence of stages (Bess & Dee, 2008). According to this approach, organizational decision making involves decision recognition, diagnosis routine for understanding the problem, development of solutions, selection or analysis of the alternatives, screening of alternatives, evaluation and choice of action, and authorization for action (Bess and Dee, 2008). Thus organizational members construct decisions engaging in a process of analyzing various alternatives.

When studying and explaining decision making as a structural approach, the major emphasis is on characteristics that influences decision making (Bess & Dee, 2008). Accordingly, in strategic model of decision making organizational members employ long term orientation and strategy, whereas in the tactical model the emphasis is on the choices organizations make about the transformation of products or services across the system. In the operational model, decision making is concerned with the timing, relationship between units, selection of personnel, and technology (Bess & Dee, 2008). Thus, depending on the organizational contest and demands of the challenges, leaders adopt suitable approach to decision making and organizational actions.

While responding to the ACT of 2004 and mandates that the administrators of the college considered threat to organizational mission and experience, leaders adopted a process model of decision making with a view to strategic change management. To understand how these leaders managed change, in the following parts of the chapter I undertake a review of the literature on sensemaking theory. In the first part, I present a discussion of the properties of sensemaking by Karl Weick and in the second section I discuss how sensemaking has been used as a theoretical framework for understanding organizational behavior.

Sensemaking Theory

In his theory of organizational sensemaking, Weick presents a theoretical approach to explain organizational events. Having introduced this approach in his 1979 work, *the Social psychology of organizing*, Weick used the theory later to study various events and their outcomes (1990; 1993) to make sense why and with what effects organizational actors engage in specific behavior. Sensemaking involves placing events within a framework, comprehending, redressing surprises, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding, and patterning (Weick, 1995). What these different organizational activities of sensemaking provide individuals with is the ability for discovering and creating or authoring and interpreting the sense of situations or events or cues (Weick, 1995).

Sensemaking is integrally connected with the act of organizing. Organizational actors organize to make sense of events or situations, and the meaning generated through sensemaking provides orderliness (Weick, 1979; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005; Weick, 2009). In other words, organizations coordinate diverse internal activities or organize the complexity within toward certain goals and what is achieved through patterned activity shapes or re-shapes organizations (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Using Weick's theory enables researchers to understand how organizations adapt to environments and reshape them, what specific strategies facilitate this change process, and how multiple approaches of organizational actors create knowledge that makes sense of the uncertain situations. Weick (1995) described sensemaking as a process and suggested seven properties that explain what sensemaking is and how sensemaking produces meaning of situations, threats or shocks, and contributes to the act of organizing. These seven properties of sensemaking are both self-contained and inter-related with action and context incorporated within each self-contained property.

First, sensemaking is grounded in the understanding or construction of the identity of organization or individuals. Weick (1995) said "depending on who I am, my definition of what is 'out there' will also change" (p. 20). In other words, organizational actors' interpretation of who they are, what they feel, what they face, or what they are doing or were doing will be influenced by either the positive identity or their negative image and these factors of the individual or organizational identity and image shape sensemaking around what is out there or what concerns the organization (Weick, 1995).

Sensemaking happens also with the need for identity creation, suggesting the close link between identity construction and enactment. What individuals and organizations perceive as their self is enacted through authoring acts and the process reoccurs or reenacts until the enactment of the self is complete (Weick, 1995). Organizational identity could be reflected in the beliefs and ideology of actors (Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford, 1986; Cuban, 1993; Trice and Beyer, 1993; Weick, 1995), workplace/organization culture (Popkewitz, Tabachnick & Wehlage, 1982; Barley, 1986; Porac, Thomas and Baden-Fuller, 1989; Spillane, 1998; Vaughan, 1996), and organizational traditions (Lin, 2000; Porac, Thomas and Baden-Fuller, 1989; Siskin, 1994; Vaughan, 1996; Yanow, 1996), social class of the actors (Anyon, 1981), and social identity (Magala, 1997) of the individuals and the organization. Thus, Weick (1995) describes sensemaking grounded in identity as;

I make sense of whatever happens around me by asking, what implications do these events have for who I will be? What the situation will have meant to me is dictated by the identity I adopt in dealing with it. And that choice, in turn, is affected by what I think is occurring. What the situation means is defined by who I become while dealing with it or what and who I represent" (p. 24).

Second, the retrospective character of sensemaking suggests that lived experiences of an organization and organizational actors guide the process of making sense of what is out there at a specific time. Weick (1995) said, "people can know what they are doing only after they have done it" (p. 24). Retrospection suggests that when we reflect on something, we are acting on what has already occurred (Helms Mills, 2003). Here, what happens in the present time explains what happened in the past or the lived experience (Weick, 1995; Helms Mills, 2003).

Retrospective sensemaking involves the process of synthesizing multiples senses or knowledge, the equivocality related to organizational events, challenges, or change demands and involves varied mechanisms like values, priorities, and preferences to generate plausible explanations or meaning (Weick, 1995). And how these meanings of the lived experiences or the past events are reconstructed depends largely on whether those events are perceived as good or bad (Weick, 1995).

Third, enactive sensemaking involves actions in creating reality and meaning. Weick (1995) suggests action as the precondition for sensemaking: "The action of saying makes it possible for people to then see what they think" (p.30). Thus, enactment in sensemaking means the situation where organizational actors produce part of the environment they engage or confront with and the process occurs with authoritative acts (Weick 1995). Describing enactment, Weick (1995) says;

> when people enact laws, they take undefined space, time, and action and draw lines, establish categories, and coin labels that create new features of the environment that did not exist before (p. 31).

These acts of the sensemaker produce enactment based on the meaning created through the act of sensemaking. What the organizational actors enact based on the sense they create provide them with further opportunities and avenues for sensemaking. What enactment achieves is making the sensemaker change from inactive to active stage in the sensemaking process and a determining factor or agent in defining what is produced or done (Weick, 2009).

Four, sensemaking is social and socially conditioned activity that involves networking and communication with actors inside and external to an organization. It suggests that the individual or organizational self, interactions, interpretations, meaning, and joint actions of organizational actors produce sense of whatever situation organizations face. This social sensemaking process requires coordination of cues concerning organizational image, prototypes, stereotypes, and roles that determine the social character of the organization (Weick, 1995).

A primary approach in social sensemaking consists of conversation, talk, or discourse. Organizational actors interact through discourse (Weick, 1995), communicative interactions (Boden, 1994; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005; Tsoukas, 2009; Garud, Dunbar and Bartel, 2011), or "ongoing authoring acts situated in everyday work" (Carlsen, 2006) to reach socially acceptable meaning. Such social construction of meaning happens through interactions with members of the organization (Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977; Cohen and Ball, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Spillane and Jennings, 1997) or through interaction with actors outside the organization (Spillane, 1999; Coburn, 2001). Researchers have widely used discourse or narrative interaction as theoretical approaches to understand the sensemaking process of organizations.

Five, sensemaking is ongoing. As knowledge generated through sensemaking becomes the foundation for human action, new avenues and realities emerge and require sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Organizational scholars regard sensemaking as organizing, an ongoing activity (Weick, 1979; Garud, Dunbar and Bartel, 2011) that perpetuates the process of becoming (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Responsiveness to environment demands organizations to be changing and becoming new as situations present newness always. The identity or ideology of the organization and even that of organizational actors influence this becoming process, and what strategies individuals or organizations adopt determine the outcome of organizational becoming. Sensemaking is a gradual development of meaning that initiates actions and decision making in the context of the environment.

Weick (1995) regards interruptions as changes in the environment that give rise to emotions and construction of organisms to react. Negative emotions occur when interruptions are perceived as harmful or detrimental to organizations. Positive emotions are generated when the interruptive element is suddenly removed or the interruptive element accelerates project completion or behavioral sequence. Weick (1995) thinks that only when removal or acceleration is unexpected, they generate positive emotions.

Six, sensemaking is focused on and by extracted cues. Weick (1995) describes them as simple and familiar structures that enable people to make sense of a larger social reality or the environment. This process involves interpreting and determining the meaning of observed cues. These extracted cues, according to Weick (1995);

> Get them moving in some general direction, and be sure they look closely at cues created by their actions so that they learn where they were and get some better idea of where they are and where they want to be (p. 55).

Thus cues from the past and understanding of these past events or actions influence the way people make sense of the current reality and determine future action. These cues could be related to the broader plan or vision of the organization or organizational actors, and these cues provide them with some points of reference for sensemaking and action building (Helms Mills, 2003).

Seven, plausibility of sensemaking refers to multiple perceptions of reality and so the likely meaning of the situation or event rather than the agreed-upon knowledge generated in sensemaking. As Weick (1995) comments:

> Given multiples cues, with multiple meanings for multiples audiences, accurate perception of 'the' object seems like a doomed intention. Making sense of that object, however, seems more plausible and more likely (p. 57).

With accuracy less likely through sensemaking, what is sensible in sensemaking is a meaning closer to the reality and that requires gathering information from multiple sources and through various methods.

Organizational and individual sensemaking follow many of these narrated properties for understanding events, threats, shocks, or change needs of organizations and how and what property or properties dominate specific sensemaking situations determine the nature and outcome of sensemaking.

Strategic Use of Sensemaking Theory

In his sensemaking theory, Weick (1995) has given researchers in organizational studies a conceptual framework to understand how organizations and organizational actors behave in specific context and manage changes. Some studies have specifically analyzed the role of sensegiving, collective sensemaking, narration or communication, enactment, context of the sensemaker, power, agency, and identity enabling members of a group to make sense of their specific organizational context and demand for change. Studies have also analyzed how sensemaking impacts organizational perfomances.

Sensemaking of particular situation or demand happens with organizational members engaging in strategic and purposeful communication. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found administrators, while introducing strategic change in an educational institution, engaging in giving sense of the change and its benefits to organizational members in order to successfully implement change. The leader makes sense of the organizational situation through observation and dialogue with employees of the university throughout the envisioning phase, signaling phase, re-visioning phase, and engineering phase of organizational change program. In order to implement the program, constructed and reconstructed through sensemaking properties, administrators give sense (sensegiving) of the change through interaction and communication with other organizational members. Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) conducted an extensive qualitative study on three symphony orchestras that involved interviews, observation, and document analysis, and analyzed what triggered and enabled organizational actors' sensegiving. The perception and anticipation of sensemaking gap or the ambiguity that limited sensemaking contributed to the sense giving dynamics of the organizational actors. In this process, the expertise, legitimacy, and opportunity facilitated the sensegiving process. These aspects of the process of sensegiving enabled organizational actors to make sense of the world, the organizational routines, practices, and performances.

Other studies specifically analyzed the collective dimension of sensemaking. Coburn (2001), looking into how teachers constructed policy messages in an educational context, found social or collective sensemaking of the policy contributing to implementation of the policy guidelines. Organizational actors' worldviews or shared understandings functioned as "gatekeeping" that determined whether organizational actors accepted or rejected messages from the environment. Luscher and Lewis (2008) conducted an action research at Billund manufacturing division of Lego Company to understand managerial sensemaking and organizational change. The study focused on how middle managers of the company who executed the executive decisions at the production end understood the organizational changes. The researchers and the managers together designed the study by identifying the issues to be clarified and collaboratively engaging in the process of sensemaking. The collaborative sensemaking enabled construction of 'workable certainty' or what Weick (1995) called plausible knowledge that motivated the change process and communicating the confusions about the change situation, tensions within the organization and in the administrative roles, and creating knowledge. Accordingly, these researchers designed social sensemaking that included interactions and communications between researchers and middle managers and analyzed how social sensemaking as an approach facilitated organizational change management.

Sensemaking involves narratives or communication between organizational actors. Patriotta (2003), while studying how the best performing teams in a Fiat auto pressing plant made sense of disruptive occurrences, discovered narrative-based approach to knowledge creation, utilization, and institutionalization contributing to sensemaking. What Patriotta (2003) discovered is Weick's (1995) idea of social communication as a sensemaking characteristic leading to better knowledge creation and organizational change management. Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009) studied the process of organizational change at a health center after two near-by hospitals merged due to financial constraints. These researchers used critical sensemaking theory to understand the change process and found change as a process which is "enacted, maintained, constrained, and made sense of through language" (p. 476).

Researchers have found enactment, the acting of implementing the knowledge created through sensemaking, enabling further acts of sensemaking. Orton's (2000) work on reorganization of the US intelligence community found enactment and sensemaking contributing to organizational decision making or construction of actions. Enactment refers to the process of interpreting the environment into organization and communicating organizational actions to the environment.

The act of sensemaking could be influenced by the context, beliefs, and attitude of those engaged in sensemaking. Helms Mills (2003) used sensemaking theory to understand the organizational change programs at Nova Scotia Power Corporations. According to Helms Mills, Weick presents sensemaking as a tool to analyze change and change management process and the approach does not capture fully the social, organizational, and socio-psychological contexts in which sensemaking occurs. She argues that understanding the formative contexts which includes institutional and imaginative frameworks, that shape the way people view reality and shape the activity systems within an organization (Blackler, 1993), not only reveals how sensemaking occurs but also explains how change is managed (Helms Mills, 2003).

Another analytical insight to understand sensemaking relates to the organizational identity of those engaged in sensemaking. Helms Mills (2003) used sensemaking theory as a heuristic to explain responses of the people of Halifax to disaster. She found that factors contributing to identity construction of sensemaking explained what cues individuals extracted to shape responses to the disaster. Pointing to the responses of the military to the disaster, she found identity constructed around the mission and mandate shaped the sensemaking focus of the organization.

Analyzing the relationship between power and sensemaking, Helms Mills (2003) suggested that sensemaking of the most powerful actor or organization determined whose sensemaking impacted more the process of change or generating of meaning. Sensemaking generated shared meaning when these differences of power among organizational sensemaking actors were acknowledged and negotiated through dialogue.

The relationship of agency with organizational sensemaking has been of interest to researchers in organizational studies. Caldwell's (2005) findings about competing discourses of agency as rationalist, contextualist, dispersalist and constructionist provided different approach to analyze the use of language in the study of organizational change. The researchers defined agency as the ability of individual members of the organization to enact meaning in a particular sensemaking context and found the members of the health center using dispersalist and constructionist agencies in communicating organizational change. They made sense individually (dispersalist) and in discourse with other organizational actors (constructionist) through the use of language and the focus of the language revealed the context in which change happened. The talk of the actors revealed the context that reflected organizational identity and enactment of discourse (values, beliefs, and experiences), and how the actors privileged extracted cues. These researchers used critical sensemaking to understand how members of organizations interpret, enact, create, and maintain language used to describe change, rather than facilitating change.

Basu and Lalazzo (2008) identified a process model of sensemaking which explains how organizations define and shape their corporate social responsibility. Through a cognitive, linguistic, and conative process, organizational actors discuss their relationship with stakeholders, their roles in the society, and the behavioral dispositions for the fulfillment of these roles and relationships. Though these scholars do not link the tripartite process with Wieck's (1995) properties of sensemaking, these aspects of the process contain some of those properties. The cognitive process involves what the organizations think about identity orientation and legitimacy. Identity orientation explains the shared perceptions of beliefs, values, and norms that unite the members of the organization and these shared perceptions determine the way they make sense of the external environment and their relationship with varied elements of the environment (p. 125-126). Legitimacy that explains the efforts of the organizations to gain social acceptance through compliance with socially accepted norms, values, beliefs, and definitions shares certain characteristics of the social nature of sensemaking. The linguistic dimension of the process model of sensemaking constitutes justification and transparency (Basu and Palazzo, 2008). Justification explains how organizations narrate the enactment or the actions adopted based on identity orientation. Transparency explains what the organization communicates with the society and involves a balanced or biased approached. Although a balanced approach to transparency provides scientific justifications, a biased approach provides only positive results. As the researchers employed the sensemaking approach to understand what a firm thinks, says, and does about its corporate social responsibility (CSR), the result suggested the relation between the organizational character and the observed outcome, current CSR status and its future, and the development of certain CSR typologies.

The relationship of sensemaking with organizational performance too has received attention from researchers. Thomas, Clark, and Gioia (1993) proposed an organizational adaptation model with scanning-interpretation-action-performance sequence to understand how sensemaking influenced organizational outcomes. Scanning involves gathering information on specific strategic issues from the organization's external environment (Kiesler and Sproull, 1982; Daft and Weick, 1984; Milliken, 1990) and internal environment (Cowan, 1986). Interpretation involves comprehending the meaning of information to understand specific organizational issues and initiate action (Gioia, 1986; Taylor and Crocker, 1981). Decision makers often categorize or label information, and such categorization processes influence later cognitions and actions and provides an adaptive cognitive framework to determine strategic action and change (Thomas, Clark, and Gioia, 1993; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Organizations determine action plans based on gathered information on specific issues and their interpretation. Researchers suggested interpretation and specific categories that define interpretation as key to understanding the organizational adaptation models or specific actions taken by the organizations in specific situation or change demand (Whetten, 1988; Tushman, Virany, and Romanelli, 1985). In this regards Thomas, Clark, and Gioia (1993) studied the impact of scanning, interpretation and action as strategic sensemaking processes on organizational performance and found a direct link between the focus of scanning which defined the information seeking, and the performance. For instance, when managers focused more on external environment, the profit of the organization increased and the focus on the internal environment enhanced customer satisfaction. Thomas, Clark, and Gioia (1993) argued that variations in sensemaking focus and strategies could determine resulting organizational performance.

In chapter three, I discuss the method I employed to study the organizational change management of the catholic college in response to the organizational changes in admission and tuition fee practices that the ACT of 2004 and its amendments enforced. In this chapter, I explain the data collection and analysis strategies used in the study to explore the sensemaking strategies of the administrators in managing organizational change mandates and creating organizational responses.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To understand the organizational change management strategy and particular changes adopted by a private self financing professional college in Kerala in response to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I chose one engineering college and studied the way its administrators constructed meaning and responses through in-depth association, familiarization of the state law, and social and scientific observations of its impacts. This case study approach also provided me in-depth personal experience and repeated opportunities to hear directly the life stories of participants and other non-participating administrators (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). I recorded these personal experiences in memos written after every visit I made to the administrative office of the college and used the information from memos to clarify and substantiate the primary data collected through interviews and documents. These broader research techniques provided greater rigor, breadth, and depth to this case study and enabled me to capture the meaning of the settings, events, and the dynamics of sensemaking and response formation specific only and in-depth to the college (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

Qualitative Approach

Employing a qualitative approach helped me to explore and understand the meaning the administrators of the college ascribed to its social setting, the political act of policy making, and the educational and administrative problems surrounding the state regulation of self financing professional colleges (Creswell, 2009). Conducting this study within the natural and local settings of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Miles and

Huberman, 1984) and exploring the worldviews of the group or individuals in their own terms (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) provided knowledge of the culture, worldviews, and traditions of the college and its administrators and what intervened in making sense of and responding to the ACT 2004 and subsequent changes in organizational responses to the state accountability policy.

Maxwell (2005) describes the interactive and integrated nature of qualitative research as allowing the researcher to move back and forth between its different components: the goals, design, theories, research questions, methods, and validity concerns. Other than making appropriate changes to the interview questions to clarify concepts that emerged in the early interviews, I adhered closely to the research design, theoretical framework, and research questions of the case study. As the study progressed with interviews and document collection, I realized reading judgments of the High Court of Kerala and the Supreme Court related to cases of the ACT of 2004 and amendments would provide another data source to clarify the interview data. Therefore, I collected those judgments from the administrators of the college and the documentation office of the state High Court.

Olsen (2006) observes that using the qualitative approach enables researchers to uncover actors' meaning systems and their perspectives in the context, knowledge, and practices upon which those meaning systems rely. These insights into the social world of the actors allow the researcher/s to analyze the perspectives contained in the data and construct meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Interviews, documents, and information from the memos provided me with extensive data to reach deep level perspectives of the participants, understand overarching social patterns and ideologies that govern and guide organizational responses to social environment, and construct meaning (Creswell, 2009: Maxwell, 2005).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the semi-structured interviews and document collection exercises of the study to understand the perspectives of the college administrators on the ACT of 2004 and its amendments:

1. What do the college administrators describe as their organization's initial responses to the ACT 2004? How have their responses to ACT 2004 evolved over time?

2. How did the college administrators construct organizational responses to state regulatory policy on private professional colleges?

3. How do the college administrators understand the impact of the ACT 2004 and its amendments on the mission of the institution?

Research Site

The case study college is a private self financing engineering college located in the southern part of the state of Kerala. As of 2012, Kerala had 13 government engineering colleges, three government-aided engineering colleges, and another 22 government colleges offering engineering degree courses as self financing programs. In addition, 92 private self-financing engineering colleges offered degree programs in Kerala. These 92 private colleges had agreed with the government on 50:50 government-management seat sharing by which the state Commissioner for Entrance Examinations allotted students to 50 percent of seats in these colleges, and those students paid around one-third of the tuition fee of management seats (35,000 : 99,000) (Government of Kerala, 2012). The college I chose for this case study, together with 11 other private self-financing engineering colleges, had refrained from 50 percent seat sharing until the 2012 agreement with the government and prevailed over the government, even in and after the 2012 agreement, for uniform fee structure for all students. These unique organizational differences of the college from many other private self-financing engineering colleges suggested unique organizational change management approach which contributed to its selection for the case study.

The college was founded in 2002, two years before the state government enacted the ACT of 2004 to regulate private professional education. This historical significance accorded the investigation a retrospective perspective and a pre-post policy situation and analysis as the administrators reflected and answered the interview questions. Further, the college had been contesting against excessive state intervention in the management of self financing colleges from the time the state enacted the ACT of 2004 and demanding administrative autonomy. Together with other private colleges, the college had been engaging in dialogue with the government and policy makers on the academic, economic, and administrative implications of the state policy for private professional college management and growth. Besides, to protect against the threat to its organizational identity as Catholic minority college, the college joined Kerala Catholic Engineering Colleges Management Association (KCECMA) in 2007 that consisted of 12 institutions and engaged in collective sensemaking, sensegiving, and strategic change management in response to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments.

Participants

I interviewed 9 senior administrators of the college to understand the organizational change management approaches of the college management that explained the meaning and significance of their responses to the ACT of 2004 and amendments. All the interviewees, except the principal, belonged to the Governing Board, which is the highest administrative organization of the college. The principal is the chief academic officer of the college and responsible for implementing the decisions of the Governing Board. These 9 interviewees met the participant selection criteria that I had set forth, namely, those who are involved in the day-today management of the college, who served longer terms on the Governing Board, and those with a diverse background. Accordingly, I selected all the five members of the Executive Committee that conducted the day-to-day administration of the Educational Trust and the engineering college for the Governing Board after obtaining their consent. These included the president who is the clergy of the local church; vice-president, a retired college principal: secretary; a retired dean of the school of engineering at a state university; joint secretary, who is a lawyer; and the treasurer who is the CEO of a business firm.

I chose another three administrators from the Governing Board based on two selection criteria: longer period of service in the governing board and diverse background. These interviewees included the founding secretary of the first executive committee who was the secretary to a state minister; a lawyer at the state High Court; and a lawyer cum businessman. The principal of the college, as the ninth participant, completed the list of interviewees. The principal who implemented the academic

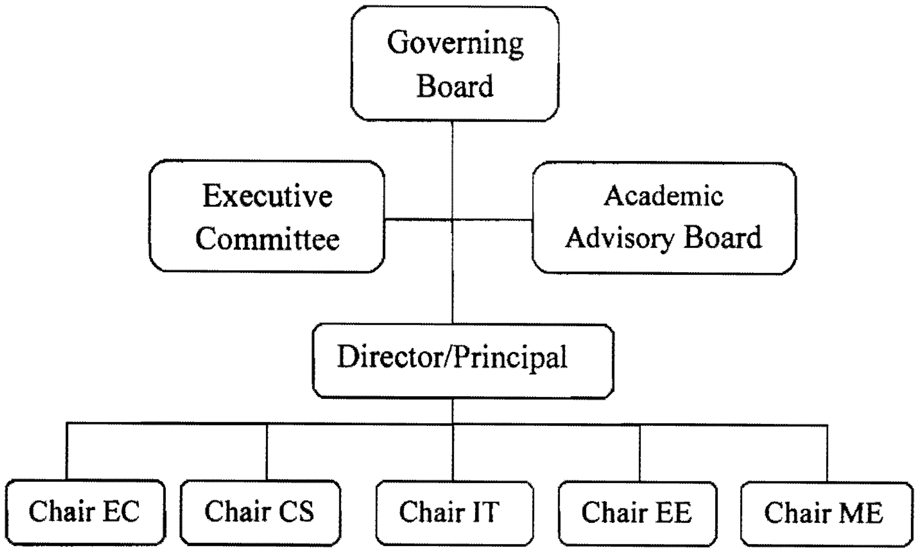

Figure 1

Organizational Chart of the College Administration

decisions of management provided different perspectives on the ACT of 2004 and the organizational change management of the college administrators with the experience as a retired principal of a government engineering college and later as principal of another Catholic self financing engineering college. Thus the choice of participants facilitated the study with in-depth, diverse, and authoritative data from administrators of the college who are actively engaged in organizational decision making and management and extended diversity through their expertise as clergy, academicians, retired state officials, lawyers, and businessmen.

Data Collection

In order to explore the perspectives of the college administrators on the state policy and organizational change management strategy and responses, I relied primarily on interviews with the nine participants, and secondarily on document analysis.

Interviews

Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to meet personally the senior administrators of the college and gather information on their organizational management and responses and facilitate generating extensive data through timely interventions and clarifications. These interviews also provided the participants with the opportunity to clarify interview questions and allowed for sufficient time to reflect and respond to questions within their familiar space and context. As the interviews provided the participants the freedom to shape and share their understanding of the topic, it enabled me as the interviewer to guide the participant from deviating from the topic of inquiry. I conducted 6 interviews in the administrative office of the Educational Society, 2 others were done in the office of the interviewees, and the last interview was conducted in the home of the participant. Eight of the interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and one lasted over one hour. I audio recorded all 9 interviews and transcribed them myself.

The interview questions covered major themes of the research that included the role of each interviewee in the management decision making process, recollection of the initial response and later changes of the management to state policy, the organizational process of response formation, principles that guided the organizational change management, the mission of the college, and the impact of the policy on college mission (a complete copy of the interview protocol is included in the appendix B). One interviewee narrated in detail the background of the foundation of the college, the formation of the educational trust that owns the college, and he was highly critical of the administration, especially the decision to sign the 2012 seat sharing agreement with the government. This interview provided much background data that explained the rationale and meaning of the organizational change management of the college, though I intervened many times to refocus the participant. Another interview produced little knowledge around the topic of the research as the interviewee drifted from the topic for every question I asked and mounted criticism on some administrators. One interviewee answered briefly to every question, whereas most others produced reflective answers that provided extensive knowledge around the topic.

Documents

I collected and analyzed two types of documents: documents from the colleges and legal documents detailing various court cases connected with the ACT of 2004 and amendments. I obtained college documents from the administrative office of the college and the campus office. These documents included a prospectus and brochures for admission into the college that narrated the college mission, criteria for academic merit decision, seat allocation, tuition fee structure, scholarships, and percentage of reservation for Christian and poor students. This prospectus and brochures contained common admission policies and practices that the college shared with the other 11 Catholic self-financing engineering colleges belonging to KCECMA.

Though the website of the college contained webpages with the common prospectus and brochures of the KCECMA, it also provided information specific to the college, including policies and practices particular to the case study college. The webpage with mandatory disclosures provided me with the annual accountability document the college submitted to the accrediting agency (AICTE), the government, and to the public for social accountability. It contained demographic data on students and faculty, academic scholarships, approved and affiliated academic programs, approved number of seats for each degree course, fee structure, and graduation rate. Specific contents of the mandatory disclosure that explained the pattern of student enrollment, their merit, scholarship, and fee structure substantially contributed to the understanding of the interview data on the enactment of organizational autonomy in conjunction or against the mandates of the state policy. Besides, the information on the academic and career background of the faculty explained the approach of the administrators to maintain the college mission to provide a quality technical education.

The High Court of Kerala provided another set of documents, namely, the judgments of the court on cases filed by the college and the consortium of Christian professional colleges against the ACT of 2004 and its amendments. Two important judgments, the first on the ACT of 2004 and the second on the amended ACT of 2006, proved highly relevant in understanding the organizational sensemaking of the college administrators on these state regulations and their responses in collaboration with other Catholic professional colleges in the state. I analyzed both judgments to understand the responses of the college, their rationale for such responses, and the interpretation and observation of the courts on the reasoning of the college on the state policy on private self-financing professional colleges in the state. Besides these two judgments, I also received from the digital documentation section of the High Court of Kerala judgments on individual cases the college petitioned against the affiliating university for delaying or rejecting the applications of the college management for new courses or increasing the seats for existing degree courses. These documents explained some of the organizational issues the college faced that directly influenced the negotiations with the government and signing of the seat-sharing agreement in 2012.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the common features that qualitative researchers use to analyze and understand the data. They include coding of fieldnotes and interview data, noting reflections and remarks in the margins, sorting the data for similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, and differences, identifying common themes, similarities, and differences for the next round of data collection, generalizations based on consistencies in the database, and comparing these generalizations with the general body of knowledge to form constructs and theories (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Accordingly, the data analysis of the case study consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display and analysis, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1984; 1994). The data reduction strategy of the research had started with the selection of sensemaking theory as the theoretical framework and determined what data was to be collected. In fact, the theoretical framework provided the yardstick for analytical choices on coding, sorting out themes, and forming generalizations. The process of data reduction that began with the selection of the topic and theoretical framework continued till the final report was completed (Miles and Huberman, 1984; 1994). Such data reduction strategy helped focus and refine data collection and analysis to tell the story of the college close to the reality of its existence, experiences, and expectations of their top level administrators.

Analysis began with the transcription of the interview data. I transcribed the audio recorded data verbatim. Since my objective in the study required me to seek for themes and explanations around the subject of the study, I did not record in the transcription elements of communication from the interview data, namely, the time-gap in conversations, communicative expressions, gestures, or mannerisms.

The transcripts revealed various themes and phrases that occurred consistently, such as charitable institution, mission, autonomy of the management, freedom, political interference, association, negotiations, judgments, financial debt, and quality education. I looked for themes that explained the research questions of the study and organized the data according to themes and sub-themes. Accordingly, I formed a data chart for each major theme of the research and organized sub-themes in columns. Later I entered the data from each interview that matched the sub-themes in numbered rows that enabled better display of the data and related the views of participants across themes (A sample data chart is attached in Appendix C). For the first research question, organizational autonomy emerged as the primary and dominant response of the college to state policy initiative and legal actions, negotiations with government, collaborations with like-minded colleges, agreement with the government, and organizational practices that contributed as sub-themes. In the case of the second research question, organizational power, autonomy, collective sensemaking, sensegiving, and sensebuilding emerged as significant sub-themes to explain the organizational sensemaking of the catholic college around the ACT of 2004 and its amendments. For the third research question, education to Christians and the poor, quality of education, and financial effect emerged as sub-themes under mission of the college. To order and analyze these complex and extensive data, I employed some data display and analysis models suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

A time-ordered matrix helped me to organize and analyze the data on organizational responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 and amendments on the basis

Table 3:

Time-Ordered Matrix

[illegible]	2002	2003	2004-2007	2008	[illegible]	[illegible]
Admission	50:50 Free & Payment seats	70:15:15 Free, Community & Management seats	100 Management Seats	100 Management seats	100 Management	100 Management Seats
Allotment	Government	Government	Management	Management	Management	Management

of chronology. This model displays and analyzes the phenomena based on the chronology of occurrence and structural or programmatic changes (Wolcott, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1984; 1994). The model suggested and explained the introduction of new practices and changes in the existing organizational practices and programs connected with the state regulatory acts.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest using effect matrix as a data display and analysis model to explain what impact certain innovations and practices bring to organizations or situations. Accordingly, using this model to understand the later organizational responses of the college to state accountability policy suggested the primary changes and the resulting impact of the agreement that the college signed with the state government and the implications of such changes on organizational practices and management of the college.

Table 4

Effect Type

[illegible]	Primary change	[illegible]
Admission	50:50 admission pattern	Better relationship with the Govt and the University Surrendered minority right
Allotment Agency	Government Allotment & Management Allotment	Two centers of power Delay in government allotment

A case dynamics matrix, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), enables researchers to order, display, and analyze the interview data based on the interaction inherent within a particular case or situation. Using this model of analysis helped in organizing the views of the participants based on sensemaking properties, the underlying issue in the context of the college, the strategy the administrators used to address the

Table 5

Sensemaking Dynamics Matrix

[illegible]	Underlying Issue	Strategy	[illegible]
Identity Construction	Minority institution Non-profit organization	Interpretation of the Constitution Legal Actions	Power
Retrospective	Politicization of higher education	Negotiation with the government	End to Uncertainty
Enactment	Admission procedure & tuition fee structure	Implementation of college policy	Compromised Autonomy

issue, and the outcome of such efforts. This exploration into the organizational change management behavior of the college explained the sensemaking that occurred on the issue of state regulatory policy that challenged the autonomy of the college and the influence of the meaning generated through sensemaking on organizational policies and practices.

I had collected printed documents that included admission prospectus and brochures of the college, the judgments from the court, and documents from the webpages of the college. While reading these documents, I looked for data that informed and explained the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview data. In analyzing those data, I sought to know how the data from the documents added to, clarified or differed from the knowledge on themes and sub-themes derived from the primary data.

The analytical strategies that I employed to explore the perspectives of the college administrators on their organizational behavior and responses in reference to the ACT of 2004 and amendments facilitated streamlining the research findings. The time-ordered analysis aided in presenting chronological progression of the enactment of organizational autonomy through enacted policy and practices related to admission and tuition fee. As the effect matrix contributed to the analysis of the organizational changes effected through the 2012 agreement with the government, it also helped presenting the perspectives of the administrators on what transpired and correspondingly resulted in the organizational change management.

Researcher Role

My research interest on the ACT of 2004 and amendments and organizational responses of private colleges to state regulations originated with the curiosity to understand the complexity of the self-financing professional education sector in Kerala. Among private self financing engineering colleges, all 110 institutions share 50 percent of their admission seats with the government but follow a separate tuition fee structure for government and management seats as the result of the implementation of the ACT of 2004 and amendments. Although 98 such colleges follow differential tuition fee, 12 colleges belonging to the Catholic managements price tuition at a uniform fee. These differences among private colleges, negotiated and approved by the state government, bring to the fore diversity in organizational principles, management perspectives, and college practices. Such a complex educational situation prompted and encouraged me, as an educational researcher, to understand the college management aspects related to the ACT of 2004.

Professional education management in Kerala has been extremely politicized since the state government initiated self-financing colleges for higher education expansion in 2001. As the government permitted self-financing colleges, its political leadership demanded 50 percent of the annual enrollment as government seats. Thus, the government intended the creation of two self-financing colleges would result in the creation of one government college without any financial investment from the state. But these government interventions without state financial support created conflicts between the state and the college managements and resulted in increased political negotiations. Further, the issue of self-financing colleges and their management contributes to political debates at elections and an ongoing organizational issue for campus student unions. These political debates surrounding self-financing professional education in Kerala have fascinated me as an educational researcher to understand the issue of the privatization of higher education.

Differences and debates on self-financing education in Kerala have resulted in various judicial interventions and clarifications. Private college managements have sought court protections to defend their autonomy and rights to administer colleges and to interpret and establish the validity of the state regulations, especially the ACT of 2004 and amendments. As a researcher, I want to understand the influence of increased judicial interventions on higher education and the impact of the legal interpretations and judgments on educational policy making in Kerala.

My interest in the study of the responses of self-financing professional colleges to the ACT of 2004 and amendments grew from my interest in understanding the higher education development in Kerala, the state of my origin. Private stakeholders have been dominant contributors for elementary and higher education growth in the state. In 2007, the private share of schools in the state reached 71.7 percent, of which 45.5 percent are publicly funded schools and 26.2 are unaided private institutions. In the case of higher education, publicly funded private Arts and Science colleges in 1991 were 132, and in 2007 such colleges numbered only 150, whereas the number of self-financing private colleges in Arts and Science reached from zero to 153 in the same period. The trend in private investment in professional education also suggests nearly 80 percent of such colleges are in the self-financing sector (Ajith Kumar and George, 2009). Therefore, the responses of self-financing professional colleges to the ACT of 2004 and the amendments and the dynamics of change management made ma want to understand the privatization of the professional education sector, the field of education to undergo the latest expansion.

For decades, the Catholic church in Kerala has contributed to the expansion of education through publicly funded and unaided schools and colleges. The trend continues with the expansion of professional education as the church has established engineering, medical, management, and other professional colleges. My origin from this community in Kerala that has historically been associated with the educational services to society also contributed to my research interest to examine the responses of one Catholic self-financing engineering college to state regulation and understand the change management strategy of the administration, the rationale behind those responses, and perspectives of the administrators on the impact of the ACT of 2004 and amendments on the college management. Self-financing professional education has been much discussed in the media and in political debates that often shapes social conscience and reactions toward private professional colleges and their management. Such a relevant and contested educational environment shaped my interest to understand scientifically the organizational responses of one college to the ACT of 2004 and amendment, the private self-financing professional education regulatory law of the state of Kerala.

My experience of the Indian higher education system consists of a bachelor and master degree completed at Indian universities and knowledge gathered from reading and dialogue with academicians and administrators. I knew the case study college through telephone conversations with the president of the Governing Board and information from the website but in detail when I visited the administrative office and campus for data collection. The participants of the study were not known to me, other than through the interviews.

Validity

Research validity depends on the accuracy of the findings with the reality of the people, subjects, or situation being examined (Maxwell, 2005). Keeping this idea in mind, I employed a qualitative method that assisted in gathering data from the present administrators of the college who engage in the day-to-day management of the college and provided them the opportunity to reflect and share about the context of and the perspectives on the ACT of 2004 and amendments within the context of their college. Semi-structured interviews provided the participants the time and occasion to give expression to their perspectives and the opportunity to clarify questions with me in case of doubt and lack of clarity with the questions. Further, the interview method helped me to clarify the interview data with the participants with substantiations and explanations.

These methodological benefits enabled me to capture research data with greater accuracy with the reality that increased the validity of the study.

I gathered documents that explained and substantiated interview data. Used as a methodological triangulation approach, the documents from the college substantiated the interview data with the actual implementation of the ACT of 2004 and amendments. Documents from the High Court of Kerala explained the responses of the college and the rationale for such management responses. All these documents explained the interview data that constituted the primary data of the study. These approaches to data collection enhanced the validity of the data and the findings of the research.

A qualitative investigator constructs meaning out of the data generated through interviews, observation, or document analysis but is often challenged to maintain objectivity in the research act (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). My Catholic background, culture, attitude, and expectations could bias the research process and the construction of meaning. To avoid subjectivity and increase validity of the study, I maintained consistency in selecting and interpreting the data (Katz, 1988) and gathering rich data, and respondent validation (Maxwell, 2005). Likewise, I maintained consistency with semi-structured interviews, verbatim transcription, document analysis, and descriptive note taking and memo writing (Maxwell, 2005). I clarified with few participants the transcribed interview data and those telephone conversations verified the data, provided added information, and avoided misrepresentation of the data (Maxwell, 2005). All these data collection approaches increased the possibility of gathering data nearest to the reality of its existence and enhanced the validity of the study.

In chapter four, I present the data analysis of the case study. The interview data and the documents gathered from the college and the state High Court about the responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments are presented according to the three research questions of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Three specific questions guided this case study research, and in this chapter I present the findings in relation to each research question. The research questions are: What do the college administrators describe as their organization's initial responses to the ACT 2004? How have their responses to ACT 2004 evolved over time? How did the college administrators construct organizational responses to state regulatory policy on private professional colleges? How do the college administrators understand the impact of the ACT 2004 and its amendments on the mission of the institution?

Organizational Responses to the ACT of 2004

The state government of Kerala enacted the ACT of 2004 and its subsequent amendments in 2006 and 2007 to regulate the admission practices and the tuition fee structure of private self-financing professional colleges. On admission, the state regulation demanded these colleges to reserve 50 percent of the annual student intake as government seats to be allocated by the state Commissioner for Entrance Examinations based on their score in the Common Entrance Test (CET). To the other 50 percent, the management seats, college managements could admit students based on their score in CET or a similar examination conducted by any consortium of colleges. On tuition fee, the policy mandated cross-subsidy or a differential fee structure and abolished capitation fee or donation for admission to the college. According to the regulation on cross-subsidy, students in government quota would pay a much lower tuition fee compared with their classmates in management quota. The first research question analyzed the responses of the college to these organizational changes to its admission and tuition fee practices enforced by the ACT of 2004 and amendments. To understand and explain better these organizational responses, I separated the data between early and later responses of the college management.

Early Response: Enacting Organizational Autonomy

The early responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 compose a chronological progression in organizational change management and to the eventual establishment of organizational autonomy in 2007.

Table 6

Time-ordered Response

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Admission	50:50* Free & Payment seats	70:15:15 Free, Community & Management seats	100 Management Seats	100 Management seats	100 Management	100 Management Seats
Allotment	Government	Government	Management	Management	Management	Management
Merit criterion	CET	CET	CET	CET & Math & Physics grade for Higher Secondary	CET & Math & Physics grade for Higher Secondary	CET & Math & Physics grade for Higher Secondary
Tuition fee	3,000: 50,000	18,000: 36,000	38700	45000	49000	75000

*All the numbers indicate percentage of seats. The table is based on Time-ordered matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

From 2002-2003, the management adhered to state regulations on admission, merit criterion, and tuition fee. In 2002, government allocated students to both free seats, which are the government seats and to paid or management seats, on 50:50 seat sharing pattern and in 2003 the seat sharing pattern changed to 70:15:15 with the separation of management seats between community and management seats. Religious and linguistic communities that established self-financing colleges received community seats as a separate allocation to admit students from their own community. The management or payment seats remained as the category of seats where students paid a much higher tuition fee compared to government seats. The 2003 change from 50:50 seats sharing to 70:15:5 increased the number of free or government seats and decreased the number of paid seats causing heavy financial loss for the college management. At this stage, students in free/government seats paid 18,000 rupees as an annual tuition fee, whereas their classmates in management and community seats paid 36,000. Such a different fee structure, fixed and enforced by the government, reduced the financial capability of the college as well as affected the administration of the college as private self-financing colleges depended largely on the tuition fee and bank credits for financial management of the college.

The introduction of 50:50 seat sharing limited the autonomy of the college to admit students of their choice, and especially to serve the student demand from the Catholic community to which the college belonged. The government decision to reduce the management seats to thirty (70:15:15) and divide it between community and management seats in 2003 further limited the autonomy of the college to cater to the student demand for professional education from, and the economic advancement of the Catholic community. The management of the college described these government controls as a violation of the administrative powers and rights of the self-financing college and especially of a minority college that has the constitutional privilege to educate students from its community.

According to the government, more students from poor and Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Communities gain access to quality professional education while increasing free/government seats in private self-financing colleges. The government reserves the maximum of 35 percent of government seats for merit students from those disadvantaged communities, whereas all other seats go to students from rich and upper middle class families who have the financial ability to pay the full tuition fee. Earlier researchers on the student demographic in state professional colleges indicated that most of the students who score high on the common entrance test and the eligibility examinations and are admitted to public professional colleges and government run self-financing colleges are from rich and upper middle income families (Ajith Kumar et al., 1997; Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009). Thus the government professional education has benefited the rich, who score high on common entrance test, and the ACT of 2004, with the separation of government seats in private self-financing colleges, enhances the opportunity of the rich to obtain a professional education at a much lower tuition fee. In contrast, students in management seats who often come from the lower middle class or belong to minority communities are educated at a high tuition rate. The Supreme Court of India, while disagreeing on cross-subsidy, had observed that the differential tuition fee benefits the rich and forces one citizen to pay for the education of another (TMA Pia vs The State of Karnataka, 2002). This Supreme Court judgment and the authors of empirical studies that reported the advantages of the rich in obtaining professional education guided the decision of the college to disagree with the state government on seat sharing and cross-subsidy in tuition fee.

Further, the state government had fixed the rank (score) in the common entrance test as the only merit determination criterion of the applicants to professional education. The college differed from the government as the vast majority of the qualifiers from the common entrance test came from rich and upper middle class families and from those living in urban areas who had a quality higher secondary education and better coaching facilities for entrance preparation (Ajith Kumar and George 1999; Ajith Kumar and George 2009). Such admission guidelines from the government restricted the autonomy of the college to admit students of their choice and decide the merit of the applicants. The ACT of 2004 mandate that restricted admission to professional education solely on the score of the common entrance test limited the options of poor test takers and applicants from rural areas who score comparatively less in these tests.

The state government enactment the ACT of 2004 made two changes to the existing 70:15:5 seat sharing formula. It reduced the government seats from 70 to 50, decreasing the number of students who paid the government tuition fee in self-financing colleges. The ACT of 2004 also cancelled community seats in private self financing colleges that ended the opportunity of the colleges established by linguistic and religious communities to allot certain seats for members of their communities. These changes still maintained government seats in self-financing colleges and enforced the differential tuition fee. The ACT of 2004 permitted self-financing colleges to admit students based on their merit in the common entrance test or any other examination conducted by a consortium of self financing colleges making the entrance examination the only decision making criterion. The policy also abolished by law the practice of capitation fee or donation for admission to colleges (ACT of 2004). The ACT of 2004 demanded self-financing colleges to maintain the quality of professional education in the state by admitting students who are competent for professional courses. Abolition of the capitation fee controlled the commercializing of professional education.

In 2004, the college instituted college-level admission and tuition fee practices, which affected primarily the organizational autonomy of the college. As a result, the college management defied the government mandate on 50:50 seat sharing as government and management seats and established all the seats as management seats and reserved the sole authority to admit students with the college administrators. The administrators of the college also decided upon a uniform tuition fee for all students and introduced need-based student grants and scholarships to educate students from low economic background. These college-level practices that defied the government policy directives and demands suggested the college enacting its organizational autonomy and claiming administrative authority on matters related to managing the institution. With the formation of the Kerala Catholic Engineering Colleges Managements' Association (KCECMA) in 2007, the college affiliated with the association and instituted a merit calculation formula that all the colleges within the association followed. College administrators combined the score of the applicants in the common entrance test with the qualifying higher secondary examination to calculate the final merit score (KCECMA, 2012)[9]. The new formula for merit determination, according to the college

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[9] The marks obtained for the qualifying exam will be subjected to the normalization process as explained below: Let MH and SH denote the mean and standard deviation of the marks in a subject (Mathematics, Physics) of all the candidates who have applied in a member college under the Higher Secondary Stream (H) of Kerala. Let MO and SO denote the mean and standard deviation of the marks in a subject (Mathematics, Physics) of all the candidates who have applied in a member college under another stream (O). If

administrators, accommodated poor test takers and those who could not afford expensive entrance coaching preparations by granting equal consideration to the grade of the applicants in higher secondary examination in the merit calculation formula. The enactment of organizational autonomy also revealed the college complying with the mandates of the ACT of 2004, abolishing the capitation fee. By terminating the practice of the capitation fee, the college accepted the effort of the government to end the commercialization of professional education, adhered to the order of the Supreme Court abolishing the capitation fee, enhanced social acceptability, and removed one of the major financial barriers that denied admission for students from lower middle and poor communities to professional education. By canceling the practice of the capitation fee and demanding the equitable tuition fee for all students, administrators of the college strived to evade the public perception of their institution as a profit-making college.

The enactment of organizational autonomy, according to the participants, came about as the college administrators engaged in legal actions, negotiations with the government, and collaboration with other colleges. Although legal actions protected the organizational rights of the college and clarified the ACT of 2004 and amendments in the light of the autonomy of private colleges, collaborations with other private colleges and negotiations with the government contributed to knowledge-making on the implications of the state accountability law and college policies on tuition fee and student admission.

Legal action. The participants in this study often referred to legal actions the

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XO is the mark of a candidate in the Other Stream O, then, YOH, the mark of that candidate in the other stream (O) normalized with respect to the Higher Secondary (H) mark of Kerala will be computed as follows:

$$Y_{OH} = M_H + S_H \left(\frac{X_o - M_o}{S_o} \right)$$

college pursued to understand, clarify, accept, or reject the mandates of the ACT of 2004 as a significant approach to define and defend the organizational autonomy of the college. Most of the respondents used phrases or referred to phrases like "we decided to fight it in the court," or "we have challenged this law in the court," or "gone to court for our issues to be rectified," that indicated the legal recourse as a predominant strategy to face the superior power of the government.

The respondent observations like "all the cases we have won" or "the court has declared this law as unconstitutional" also suggested the legal validation of their case against the government and government control of the autonomy of the college. These observations about the court decisions came spontaneously from the participants as they reflected on their legal actions. These court validations of the arguments of the college and their organizational autonomy augmented the power of the college to defy the state power in matters on the management of the college and in establishing autonomy in administering the college.

The college challenged the ACT of 2004 in the High Court of Kerala against cross-subsidy or the differential fee structure citing the Supreme Court judgment in TMA Pai *vs* The State of Karnataka case (2002) that observed cross-subsidy as forcing one citizen to pay for the education of another. Understanding that students from rich and upper middle income families perform well in common entrance tests and qualify for government seats in self-financing professional colleges, the college argued cross-subsidy as benefiting the affluent population even more and asking economically low students to subsidize the education of the rich. Further, the college interpreted the seat sharing directive as a violation of the autonomy of the college to administer educational services and even argued the seat sharing mandate as violating their minority privilege to establish and administer institutions of their choice. The college explained the autonomy to admit students to all the seats as an integral part of the right to administer educational institutions. With the High Court agreeing with the interpretation of the college on both matters, the main clauses of the ACT of 2004, admission and tuition fee directives, became unconstitutional. These judgments stopped the government from implementing the mandates of the ACT of 2004 and forced the state government to negotiate with private stakeholders. These judgments also allowed the college to define their identity and evolve organizational practices.

In 2006, the college challenged the amended regulatory policy, the ACT of 2006, in the High Court against the directive that interpreted the minority status of educational institutions. According to the ACT of 2006, a college attains minority status if the population of the community to which the college belongs is less than 50 percent of the total population of the state, the number of professional colleges run by the minority community being proportionately less than the number of professional colleges run by non-minority communities in the state, and the number of students belonging to the minority community to which the college belongs and undergoing professional education in the state less than the number of students belonging to the non-minority community in the state (Chief Executive Trustee *vs* The State of Kerala, 2006). The government interpretation of the minority status of the college threatened the minority privilege of the college as the Catholic community in Kerala runs many educational institutions compared with other communities. By rejecting the government interpretation of the minority rights and affirming the minority status of the college, the High Court affirmed the organizational identity of the college and further strengthened its efforts to establish the organizational autonomy to administer the college with less state control and establish operational practices based on the organizational needs.

Negotiations. Participants of the study referred to multiple negotiations between the government representatives and the administrators of the college after both parties differed on the ACT of 2004 and its amendments. The respondents referred to the dispositions of the college administrators as "always ready for discussion and reconciliation" with the government. Claiming that "many previous governments were not interested in that (dialogue with private colleges)" participants referred to the government imposing their power over private colleges. Participants also revealed the power relations that defined many negotiations as "they (the government) stood in their view and we stood by our view." These responses of the participants reveal power dynamics contributing significantly to the negotiations between the government and the college as state government imposing superior power and the college affirming its organizational autonomy and power. These power relations in negotiations have resulted in the failure of many of the negotiations but also led to mutually acceptable understanding on better policy and college practices.

Participants' views on negotiations between government and the college referred mostly to the issue of financial management of the college. The government insisted on "40 thousand rupees" as the annual tuition fee and the college asked for more. Such lack of coordination between these two agencies on the tuition fee also led the college to decide on 75,000 as the tuition fee for all the seats from 2007 to 2012. The responses of the participants suggested that the college engaged in negotiations with the state Fee

Regulatory Committee to fix the tuition fee even after the college decided to defy the government directive on cross-subsidy. One participant added, "in all discussion we told at least 90,000 for one year and finally after so many talks, it has come to 75,000." There are evidences in the interview data of the great difference in what the government and college administrators thought as the appropriate tuition fee, 40,000 and 90,000, respectively. Discussions have enabled these agencies to understand the actual cost of professional education in the private sector and fix the fee at 75,000 for one year.

Collectivism. The responses of the participants described the collective approach of the college in understanding and responding to the mandates of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments. When the college challenged the ACT of 2004 in the High Court, the management associated with other private self-financing colleges in the state and represented in the negotiations with the state government as a collective entity. The respondents also related to associating with other only Christian self financing professional colleges when challenging the amended ACT of 2006, especially to protect the Christian minority educational right.

A significant development in the collective approach to managing organizational challenges occurred in 2007 as the college joined with 10 other Catholic self-financing engineering colleges to form the Kerala Catholic Engineering Colleges Management Association (KCECMA). These colleges united for negotiations with the government and to evolve uniform educational policies and practices related to admission, tuition fee, and financial assistance to students. Based on this collective practice formation, these colleges follow the same admission policy and tuition fee, and they award 10 total tuition fee grants and other scholarships. The participants of the interview referred to this collectivism as a unified approach to build the image of the college, make well-informed policies and practices, increase organizational power, and enhance the power relations in interactions with state and university authorities.

Later Response: Compromising Organizational Autonomy

The administrators of the college signed an agreement with the state government in 2012 that compromised the organizational autonomy of the college and brought changes to admission and financial practices of the college. At the time of this data collection in June-July of 2012, this contract and the subsequent changes were coming in to effect for the first time. The participants of the study described in detail how the contract changed the management of the college as the contract and its stipulations were fresh in their minds. In fact, the contract changed what the college has been following for five years, starting from 2007. The effect matrix of Miles and Huberman (1994) aided me in describing and analyzing the research data on the changes after the college signed the regulatory contract with the state. This data analysis approach highlighted within the data those primary changes influenced by the contract and the anticipated or non-anticipated secondary effects on the institution (table 7).

According to the 2012 agreement with the government, the college re-introduced the seat sharing system between government and management seats after a period of five years. This surrendering of 50 percent seats to the government required the college to compromise the organizational autonomy and power it had established based on its minority rights to administer the college and backed by the interpretation and affirmation of the same by the High Court and the Supreme Court. However, participants did

Table 7

Organizational Change Effect

Admission	50:50 admission pattern	Better relationship with the Govt and the University Surrendered minority right
Allotment Agency	Government Allotment & Management Allotment	Two centers of power Delay in government allotment
Tuition Fee	No Cross-Subsidy	Scholarship Fund (Govt) Fee Regulatory Board

Based on the Effect Matrix (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.138).

mention that the college expects a better relationship with the government and in the university-college relationship and collaboration with the 2012 contract.

Based on this agreement, the college allocates students to the 50 percent management seats and the Commissioner for Entrance Examination allots the rest from the Government merit list. Prior to the agreement, the college allotted all the students based on a college-based formula for selection of students (KCECMA, 2012). The change created two separate power centers for the determination of academic merit for admission to professional education and limited the autonomy of the college to define and determine its educational vision and goals. Further, the government allotment was often delayed causing considerable loss of class days, especially for the semester one students.

The 2012 agreement mandated the college to contribute 300,000 rupees per a batch of 60 students to the state Higher Education Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for poor students. The Higher Education Scholarship Fund, suggested in the ACT of 2006 (clause 11), had not yet come into existence, and the government required private self-financing professional colleges to contribute to this scholarship fund as an accommodation for not following the government mandated cross-subsidy. Most of the participants recalled that this stipulation of the agreement as the mandate to contribute to the state scholarship fund further burdened the college as the college administrators had instituted need-based grants and scholarships at the college level.

The 2012 agreement also demanded the college to institute a separate college-based scholarship scheme for poor students admitted in government seats. Accordingly, the management has established, as one respondent said, "scholarship of 35,000 rupees for who are coming from the government quota (seats) if they are poor students ...to a maximum of 25 percent." The government had suggested 40,000 rupees as the tuition fee for all students in the college while the college management proposed 75,000. Therefore, compromising organizational autonomy by the 2012 agreement with the government brought greater financial implications to the college management that besides the need-based grants and scholarships, the college is obliged to provide a 35, 000 rupees tuition discount to 25 percent of the students in government seats and also contribute to the state scholarship fund. The impact of these changes has not been visible yet as the agreement has come into effect in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Perspectives on compromising autonomy. The college, as per the Constitution of India (Article 30 (1), has the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Yet the management of the college compromised their rights and conceded 50 percent of seats to the government by signing the 2012 seat sharing agreement. The judgment of the Supreme Court (TMA Pai *vs* The State of Karnataka 2002) and the verdict of the High Court of Kerala (2006) had reiterated the right of the minority colleges to allot students of their choice. The responses of the administrators on this major shift in organizational response to public policy initiatives identified critical social and political issues in the higher education environment in the state.

The primary reason for signing the agreement with the government was the endless bureaucratic hardships the management faced from the affiliating university. Respondents recounted an undue delay and rejection of applications for university affiliation either to begin new courses or to increase student enrollment. One respondent said, "continuously, they resist giving affiliation to our new courses." This obstruction often compelled the college to seek judicial intervention for university authorizations and affiliations. The university and its syndicate have often failed to honor the court directives that forced the college to seek further legal protection. One respondent narrated this dynamics:

> We had a lot of problems in the university. The last minute the university has not given the hall ticket for the students (to appear for university examination)...then the court has given us the permission to sit the students at the examination, then even though they wrote the examination, they (university) has not published the result, saying that the court has not said to publish the results. Then we have gone for a case to publish the result.

These developments strained the university-college relationship and collaboration, and legal battles between the college and the university have delayed admissions to academic programs each year and caused an administrative impasse and student dissatisfaction. It is evident that public policy and the responses of universities as state higher education agencies exert greater and unwarranted power that restrains the growth and functioning of private colleges in the state.

Some respondents identified political interference and politicization of the university administration as the reason for problems caused by the affiliating university. The government intervened in the university-college relationship as the college, together with other eleven Catholic engineering colleges, refrained from the seat sharing agreement with the government until 2012. Most of the participants revealed a nexus between the government and the university that challenged the autonomy of individual colleges and hindered their growth. One respondent put it very clearly, "government is pressurizing the university not to give the courses unless we sign the agreement." The participants' responses highlighted the interference of the government and political parties in the day-to-day administration of universities and their decision making. These difficulties and uncertainties that the college faced with the university and the government have influenced the management decision to sign the seat sharing agreement and to surrender 50 percent of the seats to the Government.

Respondents described the extreme politicization of the private professional education sector impacting the choice of the college to sign the 2012 seat sharing agreement. Participants viewed particularly the 2006 amendment of the ACT of 2004 as implementation of "Communist ideology" in the state educational system by restricting the freedom of private stakeholders and increasing government control over private educational institutions. Such political ideology reflected in the administration of universities as a majority of the members of the university syndicate came from the Left Democratic Front that brought the amendment. Besides, student political unions affiliated to the ruling party staged constant protests and disruptions of the administration of private self-financing colleges and influenced policy making and reframing of existing policies. Another participant commented that "UDF and the LDF are united in their view" when reflecting on the approaches of the two separate state political administrations that engaged with private self-financing professional colleges to implement the ACT of 2004 and amendments. However, many participants considered the present UDF government as "open-minded" and "unbiased" in dialogues with the private college administrators and the approach to reach mutually agreeable regulatory policy.

Some participants of the study viewed the management perception that the 2012 agreement would end the confrontation of the college with the government. According to some participants, to end the confrontation with the government was not just the decision of the college, but an organizational decision from the top administrators of the Catholic community in Kerala, and most of the Catholic engineering colleges belonging to the KCECMA upheld the decision of the community leadership. Some participants also shared that "out of twelve colleges, only three colleges were firm that we should not sign but the majority was to sign it." As a result, the decision to sign to agreement, though it was done with the view to end confrontation with the government, had disagreements within the community and the association of Catholic engineering colleges suggesting the reluctance to concede the organizational autonomy of the college.

The participants also described the idea of avoiding scandal as a reason for the 2012 agreement on seat sharing. As one respondent said, "we wanted to avoid a scandal because many people think that the church is against this (state regulation)." The political parties and the government used the media to propagate that private professional colleges engage in profiteering and the Catholic professional college managements are non-cooperative with the state government to regulate the commercialization of professional education. Besides, the college has not been successful in conveying to the public and even to its own community the actual facts surrounding the self-financing professional colleges and their organizational practices. The leadership of the community and the administrators of the Catholic self-financing colleges have not successfully informed the community and the larger society of the implications of the ACT of 2004 and amendments for private education development and creating better professional education opportunities to the larger student population.

The administrators of the college expect the 2012 agreement to assist the development of physical infrastructure and academic programs of the college. According to some, "our development and growth were stagnant. We could not start any post Graduate courses," and "because the government is hurting us in all ways and we cannot go forward." The desire of the administrators to develop the college and the academic programs, and to enhance innovation and a competitive edge over other engineering colleges, prompted the signing of the agreement in addition to bettering the relationship with the government and the university.

Organizational Sensemaking at the College

The second research question examined how the administrators of the college made sense of the organizational change enforced by the ACT of 2004 and its amendment. I assumed that how these college administrators made sense of the organizational threat or challenge would explain the responses of the college to the state regulations. To understand this sensemaking process of these administrators, Karl E. Weick (1995), in his organizational sensemaking theory, provided me with the framework. Weick describes seven self-contained and inter-related properties of sensemaking that members use to clarify, explain, or understand an organizational situation (Weick 1995). Further, I applied the case dynamics matrix of Miles and Huberman (1994) to understand the sensemaking dynamics of the college administrators related to properties of sensemaking. Case dynamics matrix enabled me to organize the data based on each sensemaking property, the underlying issue, applied strategy, and the resulting change (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and to understand the construction of meaning around responses to organizational change demands.

Identity Construction

Weick (1995) described the soul of identity construction as "whenever I define self, I define 'it,' but to define it is also to define self. Once I know who I am then I know what is out there " (p. 20). According to him, establishing and maintaining the identity of the self or the organization constitute the core function of sensemaking. He further describes the dynamics of identity construction as;

> I make sense of whatever happens around me by asking, what implications do these events have for who I will be? What the situation will have meant to me is

dictated by the identity I adopt in dealing with it. And that choice, in turn, is affected by what I think is occurring. What the situation means is defined by who I become while dealing with it or what and who I represent (pp. 23-24).

Table 8

Sensemaking Dynamics

Identity Construction	Minority institution Non-profit organization	Interpretation of the Constitution Legal Actions	Power
Retrospective	Politicization of higher education	Negotiation with the government	End to Uncertainty
Enactment	Admission procedure & tuition fee structure	Implementation of college policy	Compromised Autonomy
Social	Common Strategy Perceived organizational identity	Collective sensemaking	Selective Collaboration
Ongoing	Implementation of regulatory policy	Negotiated and self defined	Social Policy Making
Extracted Cues	Financial constrains	Data-driven	Political Solution
Plausibility	Conflicting interest	Sensegiving	Sensebuilding

Based on the Case Dynamics Matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The responses of the participants revealed constructing and interpreting the organizational identity around the "Christian/Catholic" educational institution as the core strategy of sensemaking. The college is established and administered by a Catholic Educational Trust, the local bishop is the patron of the college, a nominee represents the patron in the Governing Body, members of the Governing Body are all Catholics, and the local pastor is the ex-officio president of the Catholic Educational Trust and the Governing Board. All these aspects of the college indicated the preoccupation of the management to establish the institution with a Christian/Catholic identity. As the administrators recalled these characteristics of the college, they also verbalized their dominant thinking and understanding of the identity of the college and the administration.

Responses of the participants also suggested the efforts of the college to project and maintain this organizational identity. For instance, the management joined with the Kerala Catholic Engineering Colleges Managements Association, projected the local bishop as their spokesperson, instituted special admission preferences to the members of the Catholic community, and executed the advice of the Catholic leadership in the state when signing the 2012 seat sharing agreement with the state government. The management maintained the "Christian/Catholic" identity as they "have stayed within the framework of the Catholic Church." These organizational actions of the college to think and act within and through the community framework and perception in responding to the ACT of 2004 and amendments reflected the effort of the administrators to associate with and project their organizational identity.

The administrators of the college saw the ACT of 2004 and subsequent regulatory measures of the state government threatening its "Christian/Catholic" identity and immediately sought court interventions to protect and affirm the organizational identity. The members of the college interpreted the "Christian/Catholic" identity based on minority status accorded to Christian educational institutions in the country and their rights and privileges enshrined in the Constitution of India. Respondents expressed their sense of organizational identity and threat to minority status in words, "the minority has got the right, they can run school, and they can run professional colleges," and "we get the benefit of minority. Constitution has assured certain privileges to the minority." The college, together with other Christian professional colleges in the state, resisted and prevailed over the effort of the state government even to redefine the minority status in the ACT of 2006.

The members of the college approached the threat to their rights and privileges as minority educational institutions through the interpretation of the article 30 (1) of the Constitution of India. The Constitution privileged minority communities in India "to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice." In collaboration with other Christian professional colleges, the college petitioned against the ACT of 2004 and its amendments in the High Court and argued for organizational identity and rights in the Supreme Court of India when the state government appealed against the judgment of the High court (2006). Besides, the college obtained the certificate of minority educational institution from the National Minority Commission. Thus, legal actions and court interventions were the chief strategies of the management to reconstruct and reinterpret the organizational identity of the college and make sense of the threat to identity posed by the state ACT of 2004 and its amendments.

The respondents viewed the High Court and the Supreme Court judgments that upheld the arguments of the college as the outcomes of their legal pursuits to define and reconstruct the organizational identity. These court interpretations of the Constitutional privileges of minority educational institutions emboldened the college to reinterpret and reconstruct its "Christian/Catholic" identity and defined the organizational responses to the ACT of 2004 and the amendments. The construction of the organizational identity reinforced with Constitutional support and authoritative legal interpretations from the courts augmented the power of the college as an educational organization and ascertained their power-relations with the state and public educational policy makers. The college exercised this power in defying the state regulations on admission and tuition fee, managing negotiations with the political leadership of the state, and combating the improper practices of the affiliating university through judicial interventions. Such power-relations afforded the college administrators the knowledge and authority to articulate and enact organizational autonomy when formulating and implementing college policies on student admission and tuition fee.

Retrospection

Retrospective sensemaking occurs with the reflection of meaningful lived experience of organizational members (Weick, 1995) or analyzing what has already occurred (Helms Mills, 2003). In this sense, the administrators of the college continuously identified politicization of higher education as the core experience with the ACT of 2004 and the subsequent experiences with the state government. The respondents recalled that the Supreme Court judgment in TMA Pia vs The State of Karnataka (2002) had clearly established the right of minority colleges to admit students of their choice and abolished cross-subsidy in the self-financing professional education sector. The state government disregarded the judgment of the Supreme Court and the legislators passed the ACT of 2004 through an Act of the state legislative assembly.

Even after the High Court and the Supreme Court declared most of the clauses of the ACT of 2004 as unconstitutional, the government insisted on cross-subsidy and seat-sharing in self-financing professional colleges. The government and political parties in the state projected self-financing professional colleges as commercial entities and created administrative hurdles through their influence in the politically appointed university syndicate. One respondent narrated vividly how the administrators of the college viewed their lived experience:

> We had a lot of problems in the university. The last minute the university has not given the hall ticket for the students (to appear for university examination). Then the court has given us the permission to sit the students at the examination, then even though they wrote the examination, they (university has) not published the result saying that the court has not said to publish the results. Then we have gone for a case to publish the result.

These administrative experiences of the college affect the management and educational experiences of the students and create uncertainty academic affairs and financial loss for the administrators through the legal proceedings.

In addition, the retrospective sensemaking permitted the administrators of the college to understand how politicization of professional higher education impacted the growth and development of the institution. Referring to the impact of political influence on college development efforts, one participant said, "In fact, our development and growth were stagnant. We could not start any Post Graduate courses." Another commented "Because the government is hurting us in all ways and we cannot go forward." The government pressure on the politically-appointed and controlled university administrators and the presence of political loyalists within the university administration and employee population created a corrupt environment in the university administration that often made the college administrators difficult to deal and negotiate with. As a result, the demands of the college and their applications for newer courses and increasing annual intake of students met with resistance and undue delay.

The college employed two specific strategies to address the influence of politics in the self-financing professional education sector. First, the administrators sought legal interventions to address how politics impacted the university-college relations, especially to obtain affiliations and sanctions for courses. Second, the management negotiated with the government on contested issues on various occasions. The administrators considered that the 2012 signing of the seat sharing agreement might reduce the tensions between the college and the government and foster a better relationship with the university.

Retrospective sensemaking of the college consisted of analysis of organizational identity, reactions of the state government, relationships with educational agencies and the affiliating university, administrative difficulties caused by the politicization of higher education, perceived organizational identity of the college, and institutional advancement. The negotiations with the state government and signing of the agreement, according to many respondents, could end the administrative and academic uncertainties that adversely affected self-financing professional education in the state with the enactment of the ACT of 2004.

Enactment

According to Weick (1995), enactment in sensemaking is the act of making that which is sensed or socially constructing the reality based on the generated meaning

(Weick, 1979; Helms Mills, 2003). Organizational members' sensemaking of the environment leads to actions that extends sensemaking further or presents materials that become the constraints or opportunities organizational members face in the future (Weick, 1995). The ACT of 2004 demanded an organizational change on the college that consisted of surrendering 50 percent of the seats to the government and instituting cross-subsidy in the tuition fee structure. On two specific accounts, the college challenged the ACT of 2004 mandates. First, the Constitutional privileges ascribed to minority educational institutions grant the right to admit students of their choice. Second, the judgment of the Supreme Court in TMA Pai vs The State of Karnataka (2002) case had ruled cross-subsidy as illegal. The management argued that the mandates of the ACT of 2004 violated the constitutional and legal precedents.

The college enacted institutional policies based on its Christian/Catholic identity and the directives of the Supreme Court on the tuition fee in self-financing professional colleges. They admitted students to all the seats based on merit. One participants said, "five years ago we started making admission to all the seats." Another stated, "for the last five years we were not giving any seats share to the government, we were filling all the seats, strictly based on merit." These responses referred to the year 2007, five years before the interview took place, when the administrators admitted students to all the seats and ended the seat sharing pattern, but another document from the college showed the practice of admitting all students by the college existed from 2004 onward. A possible explanation for this difference in reference to chronology is the importance the administrators attached to the founding of Kerala Catholic Engineering Colleges Managements' Association in 2007that marked the definite period in severing the relationship with government and the college instituting its own admission and tuition fee practices.

The enactment of this separate admission policy changed in 2012 with the signing of the seat sharing agreement with the government. The government allotted students to 50 percent of the seats in the college based on the rank of the applicants in the common entrance test and the grade for mathematics, physics, and chemistry in the higher secondary examination. The college management allotted to the other 50 percent combining their common entrance score with the grade for mathematics and physics in the higher secondary examination. Thus, the college continued the same merit determining formula that, according to the respondents, analyzed better the quality of the applicants and also influenced the government agencies that allotted students to government seats to adopt similar comprehensive formula for merit calculation. Respondents saw this change in measuring the quality of the applicants, namely, to include the grades of higher secondary education with the entrance score, as a policy change influenced by the rationale of the private college administrators.

The college enacted a separate institutional policy on the tuition fee that followed the mandate of the Supreme Court. The respondents explained those authoritative acts of the college with an institutional philosophy. One said, "The SC decision that there should not be any cross-subsidy." Another added, "We were standing for uniform fee structure. So every student should pay the same." According to these respondents, the college administrators established a uniform fee structure and put in place various financial aid programs to accommodate academically qualified applicants from low-income backgrounds. The college instituted need-based grants, partial scholarships to a certain percentage of poor students, and a tuition discount of 35,000 rupees for poor students admitted in the government seats. Through these financial aid programs, the college addressed the issue of access to professional education for poor students, even though financial constraints restricted the college to limit the extent of these programs.

The signing of the seat-sharing agreement forced the college to compromise organizational autonomy and make changes in college policies and practices. Prior to the agreement, the institution followed a separate student admission pattern and fee structure. Subsequent enactments compromised the autonomy of the college management and surrendered 50 percent of the annual seats to the government and obligated the college to contribute to the state scholarship fund which diminished the organizational power of the college and administrators. The actual effect of this diminished power and its impact on the management of the institution could not be examined at the time of this research as the changes were taking effect during the interview period.

Social

Sensemaking is a social process, which suggests that the cognitive function of members is conditioned or facilitated by the inter-subjective dynamism inherent in the society, especially in an organization (Weick, 1995). One primary method of the sensemaking is interaction and communication among members of the organization or groups (Weick, 1995). In the case of the case study college, administrators engaged in multiple levels of social interaction to make sense of the educational environment and the implications and impact of the ACT of 2004 and amendments. The top administrators of the college interacted with other members of the Governing Board in the board meetings and engaged in informal interactions with other qualified members of the general body to understand the ACT of 2004. One respondent referred to the wealth of expertise within the Educational Society, "There are doctors, retired engineers, retired judges, retired principals, professors, and IAS[10] officers, including the former Chief Secretary of the State." These intra-subjective interactions and communications with members of the governing board and the general body debated on the ACT of 2004 and amendments, organizational change strategy of the college, and the public perception on the organizational identity and mission of the college. According to the participants, the government initiative to regulate private self-financing professional colleges in the state initiated greater debate and knowledge creation among the administration of the college on the ACT of 2004 and amendments, educational access, and the mission and function of the college. These interactions have, according to participants, changed college practices and policies on seat-sharing and the tuition fee, and the relationship with the government. These interactions and communications also expanded the knowledge on the identity of the college as a Christian and non-profit educational institution and extended its mission-orientation and social commitment as private investors in higher education.

The college involved in various levels of inter-subjective interactions to understand the ACT of 2004 and its amendments. These interactions consisted of issue-based dialogues and collaboration with other private and Catholic professional colleges, regular meetings and consultations with colleges within KCECMA in which the college is a founding member institution, dialogue with the government representatives, and consultations with other experts. These interactions have guided common strategy

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[10] Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers are the bureaucratic machinery of the government of India and the state governments and engage in policy making and implementation.

formation to manage organizational change demands enforced by the ACT of 2004 and addressed issues related to perceived organizational identity. These communications have, according to the participants, enhanced the social image of the college with the administrators successfully defending and clarifying the management concerns of the college and the commitment to provide quality education and increase access to professional education for students from economically poor background.

These multiple and varied college interactions and communications revealed the collective sensemaking strategy of the administrators to address threats to the organizational environment and policies. The strategy contributed to knowledge-creation, image building, response formation, and institutional policy initiatives whenever the state government intervened in the autonomy and freedom of the organization. This example of the college and its administrators describes the administrative processes of private colleges in Kerala and the social character of policy making in the contested private and professional educational environment.

Collective sensemaking of the college as a particular social cognitive activity resulted in selective collaboration. The respondents recalled the nature of the interactive dynamics that reflected selection of collaborative partners based on similar or compatible ideology, organizational identity, and mission. For instance, the college interacted and associated with other private professional colleges when the ACT of 2004 was enacted but distanced from them when such association impacted how society and the government perceived and interpreted the purpose and practices of the college and its sponsoring organization as profit making enterprises. The administrators saw the formation of separate Catholic engineering colleges managements' association and close interactions with managements within the association serving better the sensemaking process connected with state regulations and interventions. Such collective sensemaking strategy facilitated collective change management in connection with the ACT of 2004 and amendments and in creating uniform student admission and tuition fee policies, collective representation in negotiations with the government, and joint program marketing strategies through visual and printed media and a common website.

Ongoing

Sensemaking theorists suggest making sense as a continuous process and the interruptions caused by threat or shock make it an emotion-charged sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Interruptions to the sensemaking activity would produce emotional responses from organizational actor/s and these responses, in turn, influence the way actor/s make sense (Helms Mills, 2003). The political enforcement of the state government to implement the ACT of 2004 and its amended versions as regulatory policies continuously challenged the college to make sense of the policy mandate and create appropriate responses. Even though the High Court judged unconstitutional most of the clauses of the ACT of 2004 and the arguments of the state government, the state government exerted political pressure to enforce compliance with the interests of the state to regulate professional colleges. Social pressure, created through the political portrayal of self-financing colleges as commercial and profit-making entities, enforced and defined the on-going sensemaking process of the college connected with the ACT of 2004 and its mandates.

The college negotiated with the state government on admission and tuition fee mandates to reach a mutually agreeable understanding on institutional practices. The administrators of the college negotiated, according to the respondents of the research, within a framework that upheld their identity and rights as a Christian/Catholic, minority, and non-profit institution. Such a framework facilitated interactions on financial liabilities of the institution, institutional advancement, quality of technical education in the self-financing sector, commercialization of professional education, and the role and extend of state authority in private professional education. The college and the state saw negotiations as a significant approach to create mutually acceptable policies.

Respondents referred to monthly meetings of the executive committee, tri-monthly meetings of the governing board, and annual general body meetings of the Educational Society as ordinary opportunities for the college administrators to understand the educational environment of the college and bring changes, if necessary, to existing policies and practices. The respondents also mentioned extraordinary meetings of the executive committee and the governing board whenever demanded, especially when invited for negotiations with the government and judicial hearings. Periodic meetings of the KCECMA where member colleges are represented by their administrators provide the college the ongoing opportunity to make sense of the ACT of 2004 and amendments and devise organizational policies and practices. These intra-subjective and inter-subjective on-going opportunities help the administrators of the college to create and re-create knowledge on the implications of the state policy and enact and reenact college policies and practices.

These continuing sensemaking activities of the college administrators contributed toward a socially acceptable public policy formation in self-financing professional education. Negotiations between the college administrators, the government, and representatives of various political parties in Kerala have acknowledged the need and importance of private participation in higher education, especially in professional courses. These on-going communications between interested actors have created and clarified knowledge on the nature and extent of state power to regulate private colleges, private education and its financial implications to students, better financial aid policies and practices in professional education, autonomy of self-financing colleges, and the quality of technical education. Such knowledge has been integrated into problem solving in the case of private education, specifically the field of self-financing professional education and made possible socially acceptable accountability policies. These accepted norms and policies undergo further changes as the educational environment changes in the state, making sensemaking an evolving process.

Extracted Cues

Weick (1995) describes extracted cues as "simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring" (p. 50). These cues provide members of organizations a point of reference to understand the context of ideas and actions and determine their interpretation (Helms Mills, 2003). In the case of the college, administrators used organizational identity derived from the Constitutional rights and privileges accorded to minority educational institutions as the point of reference to make sense of the ACT of 2004 and amendments, policy consequences on the institutional practices, and response creation. Financial constraints, if cross-subsidy is implemented in the fee structure, served as an additional point of reference. One respondent reflected on the statement of expenditure the government placed in the state legislature on professional education in the public sector:

> They (government) are spending 73,000 rupees five years back, per student in a government college. It is not possible to run a college, to meet the expenditure, to meet the revenue from the income of the students, even now by making 75,000 rupees.

The college administrators considered the financial demands of providing a quality education and the constraints imposed by the state accountability policy as cues to make sense of the ACT of 2004 and amendments and its demand for a uniform fee structure.

Besides the financial constraints, the college administrators regard the rich and the urban dwellers as the major beneficiaries of the cross-subsidy in the tuition fee. Researchers have established that students from rich families and from urban locations performed better in common entrance tests and constituted the largest population in professional education in the state (Ajith Kumar et al., 1997; Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009). These extracted cues related to a professional education background contributed greatly to the sensemaking process of the college, and to the demand for a uniform tuition fee and supported financial aid programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Respondents considered the success of the college administrators to make the government agree on a uniform tuition fee and the financial aid policies of the college as significant steps toward making equitable the tuition fee and access policies.

Weick (1995) suggests "controlling which cues provide the point of reference determines the source of power" (p. 50). What guided the administrators' decision on the point of reference constituted the lived experience of the organization and research data on the professional education in the state. Both extracted cues, serving as the point of reference, provided the college administrators a data-driven strategy for understanding and responding to the ACT of 2004 and amendments, instituting college practices, and guiding intra-subjective and inter-subjective interactions.

The extracted cues the administrators used to address the financial burdens imposed by the cross-subsidy in the tuition fee and the data-driven approach at negotiations with the government have resulted in building consensus on tuition fee policies. The college, as the result of consensus, signed the contract to share 50 percent seats with the government, contribute to the state scholarship fund, and provide 35,000 rupees tuition discount to students from poor backgrounds admitted in government seats. Ultimately, the agreement has lessened the tensions and ushered in a better relationship between the college administrators and the government.

Plausibility

Weick (1995) describes sensemaking as the process of knowing the most likely, most plausible account of the object of inquiry. The breadth and the variety of informational inputs organizational members employ could increase the plausibility of the meaning and knowledge constructed (Sutcliffe, 1994). According to Helms Mills (2003), plausibility in sensemaking is "a feeling that something makes sense, feels right, is somewhat sensible, and fits with what you know" (p. 67). What the members of the organization gather retrospectively and based on extracted cues within a specific social environment can only be plausible as changes in these properties of sensemaking and the organizational identity could present a different sense of the reality.

The ACT of 2004 challenged the administrators of the college to make sense of the conflicting ideologies and interests involved in the enactment of the policy. Though court interventions declared the state policy unconstitutional, the political interpretation of the law and its ramifications on the social psyche, university reactions, and student protests mounted increasing demands for accountability and compliance with state demands and presented multiple instances of administrative uncertainties. All these interested actors and the college administrators worked toward the most likely knowledge on the merit and impact of the ACT of 2004 and amendments depending on the particular frame of reference and interpretation they adopted.

The college, according to the respondents, adopted a series of sensegiving approaches to influence informed decision making and impact social thinking around the state regulation on self-financing professional colleges. Besides legal proceedings and negotiation with the government, the management adopted a transparent system of student admission and a determination of merit and the management instituted scholarship programs for students from low economic backgrounds. For instance, the college invited the media to cover student counseling and allotment to management seats, published admission and scholarship details in the college website and at the administrative office, published the mandatory disclosure on the website, and guaranteed a better academic environment for students that produced better results in the university examinations. Through these management measures, the college conveyed a different sense to the dilemma and conflict surrounding self-financing professional colleges in the state.

The administrators of the college engaged in various sensebuilding acts to create an acceptable and equitable accountability policy for private self-financing education in the state. Through legal actions, the college engaged legal and constitutional experts to provide judicial interpretations for a better accountability policy that safeguards the rights and privileges of private stakeholders. Negotiations with politicians and educational policy makers set the stage for sensegiving and thereby building sense around a socially acceptable and rational educational policy. These sensebuilding measures have, according to the participants, contributed to the signing of the agreement between state government and the college and bringing changes to college policies and practices. Sensebuilding involves collaboration, trust, openness, and realism, and it remains a developing process of knowledge creation.

College Mission and Management Perspectives

By asking the third research question, I examined the perspectives of the administrators of the college on the mission of the college and the impact of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments on the mission of the college.

Perspectives on College Mission

In the first part, I analyzed the interview data on the understanding of the administrators of the college on the mission of the Educational Society and the college. From what the participants of the interview reflected and verbalized as perspectives on the mission of the college, I identified social commitment, quality technical education, education to Catholics/Christians, and education to poor students as the four major components of the organizational mission and the major themes for data organization and analysis.

Social commitment. Administrators described educational service to the society as the primary mission of the educational trust and the college. To begin this effort, they registered the educational trust that manages the engineering college as a non-profit organization in the state of Kerala. Many respondents recalled this basic character of the educational trust and the college as a "charitable society," or "non-profit organization" or "work for the development of the society." The administrators emphasized the non-profit character of the organization even as the civil society in Kerala perceived self-financing professional colleges in the state as profit-making institutions. The media and politicians often projected these colleges as business-minded entities. Many educationists describe widespread allegations of profiteering in the private professional education sector (Gnanam, 2008; Agarwal, 2009; Altbach and Mathews, 2010) that substantiated the claims of the civil society. But the administrators of the college, according to the participants, view the Educational Society and the college as service to the civil society.

The respondents expressed *education to all* as another basic thrust of the mission of the college. Though affiliated to a Catholic community and governed by a Catholic lay society, the leadership of the institution embraced the broad vision of providing education to the diverse population of the state and the country. The responses of the administrators included phrases like "opportunity for education to all" and "to help all the families, all the children." This basic thrust of the college and the management is consistent with other Catholic educational services in India that always educated students from diverse religious, cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds (CBCI, 2006). Researchers have recently found that majority of those admitted into professional courses in Kerala and thereby attained higher economic and social advantages and social status belonged to the rich and affluent (Ajith Kumar et al., 1997; Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009). The college, with its mission of providing opportunity to all, opened up the professional education sector to a wide section of society and admitted students who cannot otherwise be enrolled in competitive public colleges, and they provided special need-based grants and scholarships to students from lower economic backgrounds.

Administrators regarded providing professional education opportunity in the state as a significant aspect of the mission of the college. Private stakeholders invested in education as public higher education could not meet the student demand (Altbach, 2005; Levi, 2008; Stella, 2008). In Kerala, religious and other private organizations have historically contributed toward the expansion of elementary and higher education through their educational institutions and services. In the case of professional education, participants said, "Students from Kerala are all going to other states for professional education." Another respondent referred to students in professional courses outside Kerala, and said "About 80% students are Keralites. Those students if they wanted to study in Kerala, definitely number of colleges are required." In view of this professional education reality, the respondents saw the starting of the Educational Society and the founding of the college as expanding educational services in highly regarded and sought after professional education (Planning Commission, 1997; 2002; 2007; 2012; Agarwal, 2009). One respondent stated, "Government could not cater to the higher education needs in engineering" as the reason for the Educational Society to invest in an engineering college. Hence the purpose of starting this college, according to the respondents, consisted of providing the students, mostly from the state of Kerala, the opportunity for market-demanded professional education and having such an opportunity within the state.

Quality technical education. Administrators of the college referred to providing quality technical education as another significant objective of the founding of the institution. Participants used "quality education" or "excellence in education" or "provide better education" repeatedly in the conversation suggesting the basic thrust of the college as making the college a "center of excellence." As these administrators share their vision of the college and their educational service to the society, some spoke of specific steps the management has taken to make the college a center of excellence. Those steps included better infrastructure and technology-oriented classroom instruction, collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, for faculty academic orientation through video conferencing, hiring quality professors, and organizing faculty in-service. The participants considered these quality assurance measures as the reason for the college to achieve 34-40% graduation rate in university engineering examination compared to the twenty-five percent state average.

Educate Catholics/Christians. The college has a specific mission to provide quality technical education to Catholic students. Eight out of nine participants referred to different aspects of this commitment of the college to its own community. One particular strategy to guarantee admission for Catholic students consisted of reserving a certain percentage of annual enrollment to the Catholic community. One respondent said, "Ten percent of our seats is reserved for Catholics and another ten percent for Christians." This total of twenty percent is out of each batch of sixty students that are admitted every year. Another administrator articulated the rationale of this reservation as, "We want to have some kind of special preference to our community." The responses of the participants affirmed the commitment of the management to educate the members of their community, at the same time guaranteeing opportunity for diversity in student population.

Educate poor students. Technical and professional education to poor students has been a challenge in the state. Many researchers have pointed out that students from economically deprived families could not afford competitive and expensive professional education (Ajith Kumar et al., 1997; Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009). Respondents referred to the commitment of the college to educate students from low economic background as paramount to the mission of the college. Many participants specified the scholarships, need-based grants and stipends as specific steps taken by the college to educate students from low economic background.

When the media and the politicians allege that private professional colleges educate only the rich and the affluent and some segments of the public believe such claims, the administrators showed a strong commitment and described college practices to educate poor students even as economic constrains of the college have limited the extent of such a mission. With only ten years of existence and without endowment funds and alumni contributions, the college depended solely on student fees for operational finance. To improve the college itself required further financial investment in infrastructure growth. Yet, many respondents noted that these economic constrains have not deterred the college management from the mission to educate the poor.

Impact of ACT of 2004 on College Mission

I also focused on the perspectives of the administrators about the impact of the ACT of 2004 and amendments on college mission. The perspectives of the college administrators are organized based on 3 dominant themes that emerged from the interview data: financial perspectives, education to the Catholics/Christians, and commitment to educate the poor.

Financial perspectives. When I asked the respondents of the study about their perspectives on the impact of the ACT of 2004 and amendments on the mission of the college, seven out of nine participants highlighted its financial implications for providing a quality technical education. Through the ACT 2004, the state government intended to regulate the tuition fee structure in private professional colleges in the state and prevent profiteering. The policy mandated private professional colleges to submit for approval their educational expenses and tuition fee structure to the state constituted Fee Monitoring Commission. But the Supreme Court that mandated this requirement had also permitted private colleges to include a certain surplus amount in the annual fee for institutional development. Another Supreme Court verdict had abolished cross-subsidy, the practice of a differential fee structure in the professional education sector (Supreme Court of India, 2002). In spite of the Supreme Court judgment, the ACT of 2004 mandated cross-subsidy and instituted the Commission to monitor the tuition fee structure of private colleges. The college rejected the ACT 2004 mandate on cross-subsidy as a violation of the Supreme Court judgment and instituted a uniform fee structure for all the students to increase the tuition revenue of the college, establish an equitable tuition policy, and provide greater financial freedom to institute financial aid to students from low income backgrounds.

The college, after the approval from the Fee Monitoring Commission, collected 75,000 rupees as the annual tuition fee. The responses of the participants indicated that the college administrators preferred a higher tuition fee. One respondent said, "To run a college we should get one lakh (1,00,000) rupees as fees." Another administrator stated, "As per the government fee structure, that is totally inadequate." The responses of the participants revealed the lack of institutional freedom in handling the financial challenges of the college and also the administrative challenges such economic constraints imposed on the management, especially to maintain a competitive and innovative educational environment, institutional advancement, and quality educational and financial services to the students.

The major financial challenge of the college administrators constituted balancing the budget. One respondent said, "Our only revenue is the fee revenue. More than 75 percent goes for the payment of salaries" and another added, "A large sum is needed to meet the salary expenses." Another participant added, the "AICTE had mandated a high salary for professors." The administrators noted the requirement and the need for well qualified and experienced faculty to advance and maintain the quality of the institution while faculty salary drained most of the college budget. As the government controlled the tuition fee, the major revenue stream, the college administrators resorted to hiring inexperienced faculty and lowering faculty salary.

The financial difficulties of the college management also affected developmental work on campus as the institution, still in its early stages of establishment, required further investment in physical infrastructure. One senior administrator said, "A lot of investments are required," but the restriction on tuition had a recurring impact on the college management's struggle to recover from debt and affected the infrastructure development. Participants added, "We have heavy bank loans that we have taken overdraft from the bank" and "our expense is more because we have a lot of bank interest to be paid." These comments indicated the actual financial management of the college and how the restriction in the tuition fee impacted their growth and financial management.

This financial situation and increasing government control on the tuition fee practices of the college forced the administration to look for alternate resources to provide educational services. Participants noted the views of the administration on future financial management as fund raising from financial institutions, creating endowment funds, and developing industry-institution collaboration. Thus the state involvement in financial management and the scarcity of funds for the administration of the college have compelled the college administrators to seek new financial streams and practices.

Impact on education to the Catholics/Christians. The top administrators of the college realized that the institutional power and freedom to determine the beneficiaries of its educational service was compromised by the ACT 2004 and the subsequent amendments. On the mission to educate Catholics/Christian students one respondent said, "We could make some seats definite for our community, especially to our rite." Prior to the ACT of 2004, private self-financing colleges had community seats and colleges reserved those seats for applicants from their own community. The 2004 act cancelled this provision restricting the ability of the college to serve its community and limiting the opportunity of Christian students to qualify for a professional education. To qualify, these students had to compete with the general pool of applicants.

According to the participants, the effort of the college to provide educational service to its own community underwent changes during the years between 2002 and 2012. Referring to this change one respondent said, "Earlier the number of Catholic students was less than ten percent. Now the Christian percentage is around 40-50 percent. When the college had 15 percent community seats, the number of Christian students remained low, but when the college enacted organizational autonomy and admitted students of their choice to all the seats, the number of Christian students reached as high as 40 percent of the total student strength. This freedom to admit and educate more members of its community is again diminished with the 2012 seats sharing agreement. As the agreement with the government restricts the ability of the college administrators to admit students to 50 percent seats, the option to admit Christian applicants also will be diminished.

Impact on education to the poor. Responding to how the ACT 2004 affected the commitment of the college management to educate poor students, one respondent said, "At this time with this fee and this type of investment. Giving scholarships and grants is very difficult." This respondent echoed the reactions of many other participants who thought the government intervention in the financial administration of the college and the dependence on tuition fee as the major financial resource constrains the organizational freedom of the college to execute the mission to educate poor students. Yet some respondents noted the commitment of the college to help poor students through need-based grants and scholarships, 35,000 rupees tuition discount to 25 percent poor students admitted in government seats, and educating ten students from each class (year) with a complete tuition waiver. The 2012 agreement on seat sharing demanded the college to contribute to the state scholarship fund 300,000 rupees for a group of a 60 students that added an additional financial commitment and restricted the autonomy of the college and its administrators to execute need-based grants and scholarships to its own students.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study in reference to the literature on organizational sensemaking. The discussion will present what contribution sensemaking of the college on the ACT of 2004 and amendments made to educational policy formation and reframing of existing policies and how sensemaking impacted organizational actions toward policy mandates and educational practices.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Beginning from the 1990s, higher education in India experienced unprecedented growth in the number of institutions and enrollment as federal and state governments favored and urged private stakeholders to invest in tertiary education, and many corporates, profit and non-profit organizations, and individuals founded self-financing institutions. Such rapid expansion of these private self-financing colleges created more challenges to governments, especially to legislate accountability laws that regulate for academic quality and financial propriety and, at the same time, guarantee administrative autonomy to these colleges. In this regard, the ACT of 2004, promulgated to regulate student admission and tuition fee practices of private self-financing professional colleges, constituted the accountability policy of the state government of Kerala to which private college managements objected and legally challenged for restricting their autonomy. In this study, I undertook an investigation into the perspectives of the administrators of a self-financing professional college on its organizational change management in response to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments.

Researchers in educational policy have delineated the impact of policies on educational practices, administration, and educational outcomes, and they map the responses of practitioners, policy makers, and educational customers to understand the effectiveness and usefulness of these policies. Such scholars contribute to knowledge on policy formation and implementation as well as influencing policy changes. In my study of the organizational behavior and responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I examined the reactions of the administrators of a private professional college to a state policy that regulated student admission and tuition fee practices in all private self-financing professional colleges in Kerala. I sought to understand the organizational change management strategy of one private self-financing college reflected in its responses to state accountability policy.

My study of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments based on the perspectives of educational practitioners adds to the literature on accountability and private higher education in India. Recently, researchers on higher education in India have attested to the positive role private colleges play in the expansion of tertiary education and at the same time advocate for a proper accountability system that assures academic quality and controls the commercialization of education. In this study of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I present data on issues and topics on private higher education accountability and organizational and management issues of private colleges and contribute to this existing literature by understanding the perspectives of educational practitioners on major issues connected with accountability laws and by analyzing the organizational change management of these colleges.

Investigators in organization and organizational theory suggest sensemaking as an organizational management strategy administrators employ when faced with change demands or threats. In the case of private self-financing professional colleges in Kerala, the ACT of 2004 came as a threat to the autonomy of these colleges. The policy empowered the state and state agencies to intervene in the everyday management of these educational institutions, especially in student admission and tuition fee practices. I sought to understand, from a sensemaking perspective, the approach these college administrators took to address the ACT of 2004 and the organizational change demands the policy mandated. Given the fact that politicians and state officials with less expertise in educational management framed these policies, and in this empirical study, I sought to understand the perspectives of the college administrators, as practitioners, on the policy, its implications for the quality and expansion of private professional education in the state, and the influences on the management of these colleges.

To understand the approach of the organizational managers to change demands enforced by the ACT of 2004 and its amendments, I asked three research questions: (1) What do the college administrators describe as their organization's initial responses to the ACT of 2004? How have their responses to ACT of 2004 evolved over time? (2) How did the college administrators construct organizational responses to state regulatory policy on self-financing professional colleges? (3) How do the college administrators understand the impact of the ACT of 2004 and its amendments on the mission of the institution?

To study these management approaches and the meaning these college administrators ascribed to such strategies, I chose a qualitative approach that allowed the administrators to frame knowledge and frame it within their own organizational context. I used one private self-financing engineering college as a case to study the responses of private professional college administrators to state accountability policy knowing such an individual case approach could provide me with rich data from a single context and enable in depth data collection. To conduct this case study, I selected a self-financing engineering college which had engaged extensively in responding to the ACT of 2004, both through legal actions and negotiations with the government and other colleges.

Semi-structured interviews with nine administrators of the college served as the primary data collection strategy as I sought to understand the perspectives of the college administrators as educational practitioners on the ACT of 2004 as an educational policy. These perspectives provided management insights on the influences and implications of the state policy on self-financing educational institutions in Kerala. Further, court verdicts to cases filed by the college against the ACT of 2004 and amendments, mandatory disclosures posted on the college website, and printed admission brochures provided additional information and clarification. These diverse data enabled me to understand and analyze the meaning these administrators constructed about the policy, the organizational threat posed by the policy, and the responses they formed to accept the policy in selected cases, and to reject and challenge others as they addressed organizational change demands. In the following section, I review the major findings of the study in reference to literature on private higher education in India.

Research Question 1

The first research question analyzed the responses of the college administrators to organizational change enforced by the ACT of 2004. Even as the High Court of Kerala had ruled major policy mandates of the ACT of 2004 as unconstitutional, the state government pursued enforcing them on private colleges by amending the original policy in 2006 and engaging in dialogues with college managements. Therefore, the question examined the initial and later evolved organizational responses to the ACT of 2004 and amendments to understand organizational changes influenced by the state accountability policy.

Enactment of organizational autonomy. The administrators of the college described the state accountability measures for self-financing professional colleges as intruding into the autonomy of private colleges. As a result, the management of the college rebuffed the implementation of the accountability measures suggested in the ACT of 2004 and instituted its own organizational practices related to student admission and tuition fee and claimed the autonomy of the college management in determining those educational practices.

To enact organizational autonomy, the college sought legal support and had most of the provisions of the ACT of 2004 declared unconstitutional by the High Court. The argument of the college rested on the constitutional provisions that allowed minority communities in India to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and the verdict of the Supreme Court abolishing cross-subsidy in the private self-financing professional education sector. The judgments the college obtained in favor on these cases and the legal clarifications made by the courts suggested that better and effective public policy making ought to incorporate the constitutional rights of citizens, including minorities and the history of policy evolution.

The efforts of the college to protect its autonomy and the enactment of this autonomy by instituting its own admission and tuition fee practices from 2004 to 2012 suggested the perspectives of the college management on the extend of the government role in the management of such educational institutions and the nature and scope of state accountability policies for self-financing colleges. The management arguments to nullify the ACT of 2004 through legal measures and negotiations with the state bureaucrats and politicians on issues related to private professional education in Kerala were consistent with previous Supreme Court judgments in similar cases that added to the knowledge on proper policy making for the ever expanding and innovative private self-financing education sector. As many state governments in India enact accountability policies for self-financing colleges, the perspectives of the administrators of the college and the effort to establish and assert its organizational autonomy provide knowledge and guidelines for policy making and implementation, though the knowledge generated through this research came from the account of a single private college.

In the responses of the college from 2004 to 2012, the data showed compliance with measures contained in the ACT of 2004. Ever since the policy was enacted by the state government, the college stopped the practice of capitation fee or donation money for admission to the academic program in accordance with the mandates of the policy. From 2007, the management of the college combined the score of the common entrance test and the grades of mathematics and physics in the qualification higher secondary examination to determine the merit of the applicants and to maintain the academic standard of the program. These organizational changes reflected the willingness of the college management to comply with those accountability mandates that advocate for academic quality and an equitable fee structure without giving up organizational autonomy. The perspectives of the college administrators also noted academic standard, commercialized admission practices, and autonomy of private colleges as major issues to be addressed in any accountability policies for the self-financing higher education sector.

Compromise on organizational autonomy. The administrators of the college signed a seat sharing agreement with the state government in 2012 which required the college management to set aside 50 percent of all the seats in engineering programs for government allocation. Though the agreement with the government reduced the conflict between the college and the state, the contract compromised the organizational autonomy of the college to admit students of their choice. As the administrators recalled the factors leading to the accord between the state and the college, evidence of politicization of higher education emerged strong. Private professional colleges in the state encountered issues of bureaucratic red tape at the government and the affiliating university levels. As most of the state and university officials are registered members of labor unions belonging to two of the most prominent political parties in the state (UDF and LDF), the resistance of private colleges to politically orchestrated ACT of 2004 policies made these officials delay or reject sanctioning of academic courses and programs to private colleges. Such unwarranted politicization of higher education, especially in professional education, has disappointed and dissuaded some private stakeholders who invested in higher education and compromised the growth and quality of professional education in Kerala.

The compromised autonomy, reflected in surrendering 50 percent of the seats to government, creates academic hardships to the college and other similar private colleges. According to the contract, designated government agencies allocate merit students to government seats in private colleges, and the inordinate delay in completing this process compels these colleges to start the freshmen class late. Such a situation pressures the students to complete the curriculum of university examination with fewer days of class and requires the college administrators to organize supplementary programs and assistance to prepare students for the examinations. The government of Kerala in 2012 released the performance report of professional colleges in the state in which many private self-financing colleges achieved low graduation rate and the administrators of the college described the inefficiency related to delay in the admission process as an important factor for poor academic results. Though I did not specifically analyze the relationship between political interference in private college management, days of class in a semester and student performance outcome, the perspectives of the administrators of the college suggested political interference and bureaucratic red tape that delays the beginning of classes affecting student outcomes. According to college administrators, compromised autonomy of the college affected the admission process, whereas inefficient functioning of the government agencies, that allocate students to self-financing colleges, influenced negatively the management of private professional colleges, the quality of academic programs, and student outcome.

Research Question 2

The state accountability policy demanded organizational changes that challenged the autonomy of the college management, the nature of student population, and the financial ability of the college to provide a quality education. The second research question sought to understand the organizational change management approach of the college as reflected in their responses to the ACT of 2004 and amendments.

Organizational identity and power. To make sense of the policy and its implications for management, these administrators constructed knowledge about the identity of the college, discovered and asserted the link of the college with the parent community, the Christians, and articulated and defended their identity in courts and in negotiations with the government. Weick had identified organizational identity as an important sensemaking property that most organizations rely on to understand the external and internal threats and conflicts they face and to create meaningful responses and changes. Understanding the college and its consistent confrontational approach to the state ACT of 2004 and amendments underscored the importance the administrators of the college attached to its organizational identity as a Catholic minority educational institution that is constitutionally empowered to establish and administer the college and is authorized by the law and the interpretation of the law by the courts to admit students of their choice.

The primary response of the college to the threat posed by the state ACT of 2004 and amendments consisted of protecting the organizational identity through organized efforts to understand, interpret, and defend their identity as a Christian minority educational institution. In this end, the college collaborated with other similar-minded Christian professional colleges and litigated for the constitutional rights of minority educational institutions. In addition, the college sought certification as a minority educational institution from the National Minority Commission to protect itself from future threats to its identity. The perspectives of the administrators of the college suggested that the threat to organizational autonomy posed by the ACT of 2004 contributed to better understanding of the organizational identity and to constitute and clarify organizational policies and practices to create a better organizational image in society. Thus renewed understanding of its identity contributed to organizational changes that boosted the image of the college in society, especially among the political leadership of the state.

From a sensemaking perspective, understanding and defining the organizational identity of the college and consolidating this identity through favorable court decisions empowered the college and reaffirmed its organizational autonomy. The organizational power established through sensemaking and sensegiving of its organizational identity equipped the college administrators with greater leverage and confidence at the negotiations with the state government and credibility to its organizational practices. The organizational power of the college helped the college administrators to influence the evolution of its organizational practices, both before and after the contract was signed with the government. Before the contract, the college rejected the proposals of the government on student admission and cross-subsidy in the tuition fee and later negotiated with the government for a uniform tuition fee before the 2012 seat sharing agreement.

The process of defining and defending the organizational identity demonstrated many of the sensemaking properties that Weick proposed. Although collaboration with other Christian professional colleges reflected the social character of sensemaking, its selective nature of involving Christian colleges and distancing from non-Christian managements demonstrated the selective nature of sensemaking that consolidated and corroborated with the organizational identity and power. Organizational practices of the college related to admission and the tuition fee were in conjunction with the organizational identity and the meaning created collaboratively with other similar colleges on the ACT of 2004 and the amendments. These organizational policies, implemented as enactments related to sensemaking of the ACT of 2004 and amendments, reflected the meaning the college and other Christian colleges attached to accountability measures for self-financing professional colleges in the state.

Sensemaking of the administrators of the college, in which organizational identity had been defined and defended, contributed to the understanding of the ACT of 2004 as a public policy and its implications for the expansion and quality of private professional colleges in the state. The efforts of the college in generating elaborate knowledge about the policy and its implications contributed to better policy analysis and generating practical guidelines for policy formation. The organizational reactions of the college and similar Christian self-financing institutions that focused on and derived from their organizational identity suggested that effective policy on private higher education accountability should respect the autonomy and rights of individual colleges, engage private stakeholders in the process of policy making, and refrain from excessive politicization of educational policy making.

Research Question 3

The third research question examined the perspectives of the college administrators on the effect of the state accountability policy on its mission to provide a quality technical education, especially to Christian and poor students. Though the mission statement of the college does not state specifically about educating Christians and poor, administrators expressed these two inherent aspects of the mission shaping policy decisions and programs. These perspectives of the college administrators on the impact of the policy on mission also explained the responses of college management to the ACT of 2004 and its amendments.

Economic implications. The policy mandates of the ACT of 2004 that required private self-financing colleges to allocate 50 percent of seats to a government quota and educate those students at a lower fee hampered the financial ability of the college. As the college administrators depended largely on the tuition fee for revenue, a lower fee rate for half of the student body impeded the ability of the college to repay bank loans and recover from debt, to initiate physical and academic development projects, hire experienced faculty, and provide better salary to faculty and administrators. Such economic implications of the ACT of 2004 affected the ability of private professional colleges to provide a quality technical education and to maintain their financial autonomy to innovate professional education. These economic implications influenced the decision of the college management in 2007 to enact the organizational autonomy to admit students of their choice to all seats and institute a uniform fee structure. In 2012, the college instituted government and management seats for admission as the result of the contract with the government but it made no changes to the uniform fee structure. Yet, government control on the fee structure through the state-appointed Fee Regulatory Committee restricts the autonomy of management to determine product-based tuition fees and forces colleges to seek external financial resources and partnerships to provide a quality professional education.

The cross-subsidy or differential fee structure for government and management seats in self-financing colleges benefited the rich and the upper middle class more than the middle class and poor. Researchers have found that students from rich and upper middle class families perform much higher in common entrance tests (Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009) and qualify for government seats and gain a professional education at a much lower tuition fee. The Supreme Court had also observed these economic and social imbalances while judging against cross-subsidy in the self-financing higher education sector. The efforts of the college to uphold the sanctity of these findings and Supreme Court judgment through the enactment of a uniform fee structure and by negotiating with the government have averted a great financial problem and created knowledge on the social and economic implications of cross-subsidy in private sector higher education.

Academic implications. As the college signed the 2012 seat sharing agreement and set aside 50 percent of the annual enrollment as government seats, the ability of management to educate members of the Christian community it represented and economically poor students was restricted. Further, the contract also stipulated that the college contribute 300,000 rupees per 60 students to the state scholarship fund. These economic requirements further limited the financial viability of the college to educate more merit students from Christian and poor communities considering that many of those applicants required academic scholarships.

Implications and Recommendations

In my study of the organizational behavior and responses of the college to the ACT of 2004 and amendments, I outlined the perspectives of private college administrators on the implications of the state policy for educational practitioners and administrators. Federal government and national planning commission policy makers have consistently opted for private participation to expand higher education in India, especially to create a more skilled labor force. These federal policy makers have also advocated in the national policy documents for liberalization of laws and regulations to facilitate private investment and to bring competition and innovation to higher education. But lack of a federal accountability policy that incorporates the vision for national development and educational expansion has left the responsibility and right to authorize and regulate private colleges to state governments and state level policy makers. In this study of the perspectives of the college administrators on the ACT of 2004 and amendments and issues contested on the accountability policy, I found state politics and political interest groups dictating the content and emphases of the accountability policy and restricting the innovative and competitive character of private colleges. Therefore, creating a federal accountability policy or issuing specific regulatory guidelines based on federal policy prioritized for higher education to educational agencies that formulate accountability laws becomes imperative for federal policy makers at the planning commission and federal government.

In this study of the responses of private college administrators to state accountability policy, I uncovered problems of excessive bureaucracy caused by multiple regulatory agencies, both at the federal and state levels. Private professional colleges are regulated by the state government, state affiliating universities, state higher education councils, national technical councils, and the University Grants Commission. According to the participants, absence of a coordinated regulatory framework creates confusion in administrative roles of these agencies, excessive bureaucratic process, delay, and corruption. Therefore, creating a single regulatory agency at the federal level and adopting and implementing policies through its state affiliates would bring coherence and coordination to accountability policies and incorporate the federal policy vision with the higher education expansion process.

The consistent approach of the college administrators to define and defend their organizational identity while responding to the ACT of 2004 and amendments describes the perspectives of private investors on state accountability laws. These responders assert the autonomy to frame college policies and practices specific to the tuition fee and student admission as the right of the college administrators. The administrators understand the excessive state intervention and politicization of accountability policies that create conflict between the government and private self financing professional colleges. Hence, this study proposes to the state government and state educational policy makers to limit state interventions and guarantee autonomy of the colleges while formulating public accountability policies to regulate private colleges.

While enacting organizational autonomy, the college administrators eliminated the capitation fee as mandated by the ACT of 2004 and amendments but objected to seat sharing and cross-subsidy in the tuition fee. To enact these college policies and practices on student admission and fee structure, administrators of the college relied also on established knowledge. Constitutional rights provided the background for autonomy principles and empirical knowledge on students in professional education, and their financial background (Ajith Kumar et al., 1997; Ajith Kumar and George, 1999; Ajith Kumar and George, 2009) contributed to the policy on tuition fees. The responses of the college administrators show better incorporation of existing literature and comprehensive observation of the professional education context in the state. Therefore, I propose the state policy makers adopt a comprehensive approach to map higher education, especially the professional education context in the state to create better accountability policies in education.

In this study of the responses of the college administrators to the ACT of 2004 and amendments, college administrators disclosed the impact of the state regulatory policy on the mission of the college. With its specific mission and the diversity it brings to the higher education environment in the state, the college assures innovation and competition in the professional education context. According to the respondents, the ACT of 2004 and amendments stifle institutional diversity and innovation while attempting to divide these colleges based on government and management seats and having separate administrators monitor admission practices. With the establishment of separate seats in private self-financing colleges, the government forces political interests to meddle in the administration of private colleges and stifle their diversification ability and opportunities. Therefore, I propose that the state policy makers, while framing accountability policies, account for institutional diversity to promote greater innovation.

The government of Kerala enacted the ACT of 2004 and amendments to assure the quality of education in private self financing colleges and to end commercialization. To this end, the accountability policy justified itself, though some of the mandates interfered with the autonomy of the college and drew protest and justifications from the college administrators. I propose that college administrators incorporate transparent quality assurance measures and fairness with the fee structure to address the concerns of the government with public accountability.

Limitations

I selected the interview participants from the list of the members of the governing board of the college and deliberately included board members with diverse professional backgrounds in order to gather broader perspectives on the organizational sensemaking and responses of the college administrators to the ACT of 2004 and amendments. This may have provided extensive data though inclusion of more administrators as interview participants may have provided wider perspectives and knowledge.

I limited this research on the case of one private self-financing professional college and its responses to the ACT of 2004 and amendments. Therefore, the knowledge generated through this research cannot be generalized to other private professional colleges or even to private colleges with similar mission and reactions to the state regulatory policy. However, similar studies on the responses of the administrators of other private self-financing professional colleges could enrich our understanding of the organizational sensemaking and responses of private colleges to the ACT of 2004 and amendments.

Future Research

Future research involving the perspectives of the administrators of other self-financing professional colleges in Kerala would contribute more to the knowledge on the ACT of 2004 and amendments and the responses of private colleges to state accountability laws. Various religious and non-religious organizations have invested in professional education in Kerala and have responded differently to the state accountability laws. Understanding how these colleges made sense of the state policy and its impact on private higher education adds to the literature on the nature and process of the expansion of private higher education in India.

Private investment in higher education has been expanding throughout the country since the early 1880s and many Southern states and Maharashtra have a vast private sector, especially in professional education. Comprehending how these states regulate the quality of education and control commercialization, and how private investors respond to the government approaches brings added knowledge to the understanding of private higher education and the process of its expansion in the country.

Globally, private higher education has been growing and has contributed to the higher education expansion of most countries. This rapid expansion of private higher education has also forced many countries to regulate these institutions according to national developmental goals and ideologies. Understanding how accountability polices impact private higher education and how private stakeholders respond to state regulations in these countries create more knowledge and maps the private higher education growth globally.

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Aided college. Private college that receives public fund for faculty salary, administrative cost, and maintenance expense is known as aided college. Aided college is also called grant-in aid college (Agarwal, 2009).

Self financing college. A college operated with private fund and depending largely on tuition fee for educational operation is called self financing college.

Affiliating university. A university that affiliates undergraduate and graduate colleges and reserves the authority to determine curriculum and faculty qualification and recognition and conduct the examination and grant degrees in India is called affiliating university. Affiliating university has a set geographical service area determined by the state government (Jayaram, 2004; Agarwal, 2009).

Affiliated college. Undergraduate or graduate college that is affiliated to a university is called affiliated college. Affiliated college primarily prepares students for university examinations according to the curriculum set by the affiliating university (Jayaram, 2004).

Catholic. The term 'Catholic' means universal. In Christianity, Catholic Church refers to 23 autonomous particular churches who accept the primacy of the Pope. The Catholic Church in India comprises of 3 particular churches: Roman Catholic Church (Latin Church), Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, and Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Administrator. Administrator of the colleges in this research refers to the members of the Governing Board and the Principal of the college where I conducted the case study. These administrators constitute the apex governing body and decision makers of the college.

Minority. The Constitution of India notifies that Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians are minority communities in the country based on their religious status (Chowdhry, 2009). The present study considers the term only in its religious sense to mean those faith communities that are minority.

Gross enrollment ratio (GER). GER refers to the total enrollment of students in particular level of education in terms of percentage of the total population of students for that specific level of education (UNESCO, 2005). For the present study, GER is referred to the percentage of students in India's tertiary level of education.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

How long have you been in this institution? What could you tell about your role and current position at this institution?

What differences do you see today in the responses of your institution to ACT 2004 and its amendments compared with the earlier responses? What caused the change?

Who do you think makes the decision on the institutional responses to the state law on regulation of private professional colleges?

With whom do the leaders of your college discuss before negotiating with the state government on the mandates of the ACT 2004 and its amendments? Any changes in this approach over the years?

What extend are you involved in shaping the responses of your college to the ACT 2004 and its amendments?

Can you specify the value/s that shaped the responses of your institution to the state regulation of private professional colleges through ACT 2004 and its amendments? Any changes in any values or the interpretation of the values over the years?

Did administrators of your college play any role in the amendments of the ACT 2004? If so, how?

What do you think as the mission of your institution?

Can you specify how the ACT 2004 and its amendments affect the mission of your college?

Appendix C

Sample Data-display Table

Perception of the management on the impact of the state policy and interventions on mission

Participant	Financial Perspectives	Quality of Education	Education to Catholics	Education to poor
1	At this time with this fee, and this type of investment and all, that all (giving scholarships and grants) is very difficult. To run a college we should get one lakh (hundred thousand rupees) as fees.	I have insisted that all the practical should be done by the single student...student will get one computer (equipment) independently. Nothing else we can do in the quality.		We (the church) should run coaching centers for the poor to see that they are ranked writing the entrance examination and they are coming in the top.
2	The present government fees is totally inadequate. As per the government fee structure, that is totally inadequate	If the quality of the institution improves, new admissions will come, so that the expenditure can be met from the additional collection of fees.		We have to pay around 3 lakhs (3 hundred thousand rupees) to the government as scholarship for each batch (60 students), government scholarships for deserving students.

3	Our only revenue is the fee revenue. More than 75% goes for payment of salaries.	But it is not at the expense of quality. All out laboratories are well equipped and well planned, classrooms are well furnished, and they (government and university officials) admire our facilities.	We can give preference to candidates coming from our own community (in the 50% management seats).	We give every year around 10 or 20 scholarships by way of either full fee or half fee concessions for deserving students.
4	Now we have better fees ratio, we could help more. We are planning to have a scholarship fund; collecting money from people…we could give more scholarships to poor and deserving candidates.			We are planning to have a scholarship fund; collecting money from people…we could give more scholarships to poor and deserving candidates.
5	Main consideration will be their income (to decide on tuition discount and scholarships). There will not be any other consideration in fees.	We have a status and somewhat a good reputation. We could establish that (our college) is one of the best among the self financing colleges.	We could make some seats definite for our community, especially to our rite that is Syro-Malabar.	We have to provide 3 lakhs (3 hundred thousand rupees (for every 60 seats for a scholarship fund.
6	Last time 100% was on merit and there was lot of transparency in the matter of admission in the Catholics,		They (Syro-Malabar Catholics from the affiliated diocese) got admission just because	

	these 10 colleges (colleges belonging to the association).		that they happened to be the members of the minority community.	
7	This college is financed by ordinary people, ordinary people from Syro-Malabar but we have no special advantage. .. we spend all the money and we built all the facilities and we have no right (interprets government stand).		More catholic students are educated, especially poor students. 15% of our students we are giving scholarships….Catholic students from this.	The government can say this and they are not giving a single pie for the poor children, no scholarship but we are giving scholarships. For 15% children (scholarships). …we are spending a lot of money for that.
8	If there is a good financial management that 75,000 rupees is enough because we have already completed about 10 years.	We have not yet gone for NAC accreditation but there is a process going on….we made our own internal evaluation …		
9	Our expense is more because we have lot of bank interest to be paid and we do not have many students.	The standard of education has come down everywhere; there is always strike and fights.	When the government is asking us to allot 50%, we are losing our chance to educate our people. So these efforts (to educate the students from the community) have been affected by the law.	