

How Subordinate Staffs Construe Key ‘Complexity Events’ Around a PPP Project Running at Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal? An Interpretative Study

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to study how subordinate staffs attached to a PPP service delivery project of Government of West Bengal construe project complexity events as a PPP reality unfolds. The study conducted from both government and private ends, suggests that interpretation of key events on project complexity in interactional terms unfold in three stages – blind lane Linking (${}_bL_e$), double way linking (${}_dL_w$) and high way linking (${}_hL_w$). The construed PPP reality and interpretive tasks at each stage as well as, particularly in Indian context, the culturally constructed triggers that impel subordinate staffs to shift from one state to another are described. Finally, in the context of PPP research, some implications are discussed.

Key Words: Complexity events, Indian context, Interpretation, PPP, Subordinate staffs.

Introduction

Public – Private Partnership (PPP) projects are gaining wide popularity in West Bengal for private financing and infrastructure maintenance of computerized service delivery sectors of Government of West Bengal (GOWB). In a fast growing but capital scare economy like West Bengal, PPP is a viable alternative to public funding by harnessing private sector efficiencies which traditionally had been government domain. In these sorts of governance networks, the relationship between public and private employees are ought to be characterized by a high degree of interdependency and complex decision making processes cultivated in fast changing work culture. Therefore, the government organizations which are made attached to PPP projects are confronting a myriad of interactionally complex changing events which they must respond. Traditionally, scholars of PPP literature have viewed organization responses to PPP events as entailing specific managerial or bureaucratic (Boyne *et al*, 2005; Forbes and Laurence, 2005; Hill and Laurence, 2005). However, there is a steady scholastic movement to the analysis of the cognitive side of organizational life which has brought into focus the interpretive processes associated with organizational phenomena (Daft and Weick, 1984; Isabella, 1988). It is surprising that the study of PPP events of this dimension, specifically in the context of indigenous Indian culture, have not invited the attention of contemporary Indian PPP researchers. This has been identified as a ‘research gap’ in the existing PPP literature of India.

Among the most challenging PPP events to which public departments and private organizations must respond are those that become interactional the contexts of project complexity between public and private employees around the incidents of substantial change and adaptation. These interactional events are rarely static. Unfolding over time, these demand continual adjustment and pose for unending challenge for all concerned in government administration and project management. Although many studies have elaborated upon the concrete behaviours and actions connected with these change around project complexity (Klijn and Teisman, 2003), few have tried to cognize the interpretive side of such complexity issues where the process of the social construction of meaning is prioritized rather than the notion of complexity as a final outcome.

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The purpose of this research, therefore, was to investigate the interpretive side of project complexity, evident in the service delivery sectors of GOWB computerized under PPP model.

Interpretation and the Process of Change

A. Organizational Change Research

On organizational change, there had been considerable research on the sequence of activities that facilitates the process of change (Delbecq and Van de Ven, 1971; Sutton, 1987). The literatures on organizational change in general (Van de Ven, 1980) have suggested that a substantial amount of cognition and interpretation accompanies the process of change (Isabella, 1990). In their own words of Quinn and Kimberly (1984):

Transitions are themselves transitional. As they evolve, different emphases on a different combination of values and assumptions may be required. When a change is initiated, existing patterns are disrupted and this results in a period of uncertainty and conflict.

* Emphasis added

In other words, as a change unfolds, different assumptions and orientations are required at different time in the process. The situated actors involved in a change need to undergo an alternation of their cognitive structure. The frame of reference, the perspective through which people view an event that shifts (Isabella, 1990). In the context of PPP events, during the disruption of existing patterns, the exact nature of different and changing PPP actors cognitions and interpretations, however, has yet to be fully explicated in terms of interactional complexity conceptualized otherwise as 'Project – complexity' in this study.

B. Interpretive Literature and Conceptualization of PPP Project Complexity from Process Data

Process research is concerned with understanding how things evolve over time and why they evolve in this way. The process data, therefore, consist largely of stories about what happened and who did, what, when, that is events, activities, and choices over time. Therefore, temporal ordering and probabilistic interaction between entities are important here wherein 'events' have been conceptualized as isolated units of analysis with a particular location of time (Mohr, 1982; Langley, 1999).

In this study, during conceptualization of project complexity in interactional terms which remains operative between the employees of a running PPP project, the authors consciously avoided data analysis that was prematurely influenced by existing theoretical frameworks; rather complexity events had been examined in accordance to the similarities in points of view of the situated actors (Gephart, 1984) or construed realities (Sutton, 1987) that guided the attribution of meaning (Isabella, 1990). In this study, interpretation of complexity events is defined as translating events and developing framework of understanding with due attention to temporal dimension of interpretation (Ranson, *et al.*1980) and cognitive logic (Silverman, 1984). Hence, the strength of this interpretive stream of research from process data had been the articulation of situated actors 'collective view points' on complexity events.

Interpretive Assumptions for this Study

The first assumption is that as because the scope of this study is confined within the framework of organisational routine tasks for supporting a computerized systems installed for providing improved public service and the subordinate staffs are mainly responsible for upkeeping such systems, their collective viewpoints are especially salient because they bear the burden of such routine tasks. Hence, they appear to be at the heart of cognitive shifts around complexity events of routinized task structure of any PPP project.

The second assumption is that organizational members create, or enact, the reality they inhabit (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1979) interpretations of which are made *a posteriori* (Daft and Weick, 1984) i.e. these focus on elapsed action and what has occurred (Bateson, 1972).

The final assumption is that 'frames of reference' that individual members can share exist within a collectivity (Daft and Weick, 1984). Created over via social interchange or negotiated over time (Walsh et al, 1988), this cognitive consensuality (Gioia and Sims, 1986) represents the dominant reality of a group (Pralhad and Bettis, 1986).

Situating on these assumptions, the authors of this study designed an inductive study to explore the following questions:

- a. How do subordinate staffs construe complexity events over time?
- b. How are those viewpoints linked to the process of shifting notions of project complexity?

Methodology

A. Research Strategy

The study reported here was designed to identify the interpretations that subordinate staffs construct to understand key complexity events around a PPP project. The authors selected 18 employees (from both public and private ends) from a public office of GOWB situated in District Purba Medinipur where the PPP project was running to participate in the study. Each employee was asked to describe and discuss five events that had occurred in that office of GOWB over the previous four years. An inductive¹ approach was taken here consistent with the research goals of this study.

B. Sample

The authors randomly selected employees so that the sample would represent varied tenures. The final sample included five private organization employees who had been attached to this project on a contractual basis and remaining thirteen staffs were permanent government employees who had experience of manual performance of tasks but gradually learnt the systems supporting routine works over time. Tenures varied from 3 to 27 years. In addition to this sample size, two stakeholders of this project had been interviewed with the expectation that the information they provided about the complexity events would represent the dominant reality of the hybrid group. The functional areas represented were accounting, data entry and processing, legal services and hardware maintenance.

Selection and Presentation of Complexity Events

This research strategy allowed the subordinate staffs to describe and discuss five specific complexity events as well as any additional events they also cognized as critical. The authors garnered inspiration directly from Schein's (1985) notion that the events are critical when participants themselves perceive them as such. Because these events make a difference in people's thought and action, they are 'key events' in the eyes of situated actors of this PPP project. To determine the key events, the authors of this study asked four employees (two from private end and two from public end) in a pilot interview session to name complexity events of the previous four years that they considered interactionally critical around the overall project functioning. They were : (i) Installation of 'computerized systems support'² the tasks structure on service delivery which was performed previously manually would be henceforth performed via

¹ It can be argued that while the data themselves can yield empirical regularities, abstract conceptualization is required to imagine the 'generative mechanisms' that are driving them. Therefore, any rigid adherence to inductive strategies seems unnecessarily stultifying because understanding comes from a combination of data and abstract conceptualization (Tsoukas, 1989).

² Henceforth will be mentioned as [S-s].

software programming; (2) hybrid hierarchy; (3) interactional confusion over new task structure and staffing pattern; (4) Desk sharing; and (5) hybrid work culture. We represented the same five complexity events to each subordinate staff interviewed during data collection in order to provide a common stimulus around which interpretive comparisons could be made (Pettigrew, 1979). The appendix attached gives the questions used to guide the interviews.

The purpose of the key complexity events interview was to learn as much as possible about subordinate staffs concerns, perceptions, observations and thoughts in connection with the specific key events. A detailed set of open ended questions that the researchers asked the employees to relate what they knew about the event in question, saying 'Tell me about the event of interactional complexity from your point of view tell me what happened before during or after the event occurred'. That shared pattern of specific key event wise recollection of activities and incidents created the 'broadest bracket' (Schutz, 1967) for the event. All the interviews were recorded by 'pencil and paper' technique including the 'transcribed verbatim' so that the raw data could be systematically analyzed.

Qualitative Analysis

The analysis procedure followed in this study had been the Grounded Theory (GT) approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), often referred to as the constant comparative method suggesting that similar data are ground and conceptually labelled. Then concepts are categorized. Categories are linked and organized by relationship and finally a theory emerges (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The analysis is the interplay between the researcher and the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). By starting with data from lived experience of the research participants, the researcher can, from the beginning attend to how they construct their worlds. That lived experience shapes the researcher's approach to data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 1994). GT approach requires the researchers to have a creative imagination. In other words, the result of this fluid movement between theory and data is a reconceptualization, often based on a creative leap (Mintzberg, 1979).

During the data collection phase at an organization of GOWB studied here, notes on the facts specific details, and other pieces of information that a number of subordinate staffs seemed to repeat actually augmented the emergence of a theory about the shifting cognitions of PPP project complexity events. In other words, it was appeared that the employees entrusted to upkeep [S-s] in a routine basis viewed complexity events differently at different times. Open coding was considered in the initial phase of analysis. That openness of initial coding helped these authors to think and allow new ideas to emerge. As Charmaz (2006) recommends, the data were broken into segments which are called 'incidents'. An incident is found in a phrase, a sentence or two but infrequently in as many words a paragraph.

Then the incidents were compared with other incidents and other data, to discover or to develop the 'code'. Here coding implied the using of simple, short and active words which reflected these actions. Then the codes were analysed and those relating to a 'common theme' were collected together a lower level of commonality, called 'concepts'. Finally, the concepts were grouped to find a higher level commonality called 'categories'. Table 1 outlines the concepts and categories used to frame coding of the data.

**TABLE 1
DEVELOPMENT OF CODING CATEGORIES**

Categories of lower level commonalities	Examples	Categories of higher level commonalities
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Common concerns	Uncertainty about tasks structure Lack of knowledge and skill Inadequate training programmes and absence of motivation system Concern about loss of jobs	Affective randomness
Similar details noted	Traditional administrative superiors are not the only decision makers Older employees were comparatively more resistance – prone to changed working pattern Tasks could not be allotted according to the seniority but to the matching skill for handling (S-s) tools	Border disputes between old and new values. Observation of changing events
Similar perceptions	New furniture arrangements Hybrid staffing and authority pattern paving way for hybrid way of procurement and maintenance of office equipments Speedy and improved service delivery to public Staffs belong to the same generations can share work related emotions and problems In the occasions of ‘common dining’ the negative impacts of dissents appear to be reduced	Accommodating others Learning
Future co- options	Adjusting to new routine work We can't ignore or avoid the PPP – reality revolving around automated systems of service delivery	Improved open ended service standards
Down the memory lane	We miss here warm interpersonal relationships between senior and junior staffs	Recollections of indigenous cultural directives

At the completion of data collection each complexity event description was systematically examined for evidence of data which would fit these categories. The authors of this study reviewed each interview transcript, extracted verbatim sections, recorded them on a separate sheet of paper and coded them into categories. Approximately 90 such excerpts were recorded and 20 box-memos were written. After the completion of coding phases, all interview segments were recorded chronologically creating a progression of data proceeding from before each event through its completion. Table 2 shows flow of responses across each of five events.

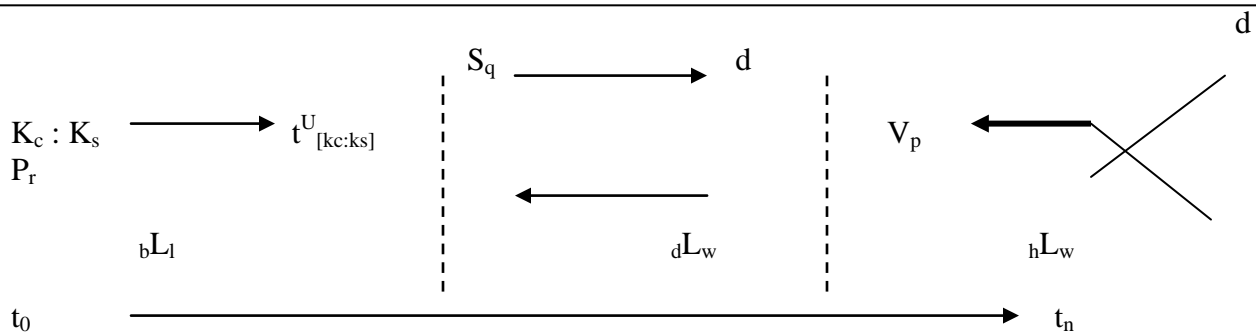
A process database poses considerable challenges. The sheer volume of words to be organised and understood can create a sense of drowning in a shapeless mass of information. The complexity and the ambiguity of the data make it difficult to know where to start

(Langley,1999). In this research, the process database had been dealt with the evolution of relationships between people or with the cognitions and emotions of individuals as they interpreted and reacted to events (Peterson, 1998). Therefore, as Isabella (1990) recommends, the authors examined the coded categories and their relationships with one another for patterns, themes and processes that would account for the frequency, strength, and the presence or absence of any category outlining both the sequence of evolving interpretations and the processes through which those interpretations unfolded.

A. How do Subordinate Staffs construe Key Complexity events Over Time?

The data processing from this research manifested that interpretations of key complexity events evolve through three stages: blind lane linking (bL_l), double way linking (dL_w), and high way linking (hL_w). Though Mandelbaum(1970) remarks in different context that no generalization can be proved, disproved or modified before it is formulated which most intuitively seemed to these authors to be applicable at this stage of research and through there had been us research goal to formulate the process data and / or to venture for ‘excessive truth claim’, for the purpose of better conceptualization a formula – like – figure is presented below:

**FIGURE 1
THREE STAGES OF EVOLUTION OF COMPLEXITY EVENTS**



K_c = Knowledge of core departmental tasks;
 K_s = Knowledge on [S-s] tasks;
 U = Uncertainty resembling quasi extreme situation of survival;
 T = Time factor;
 S_q = Systems qualifications demanding both K_c and K_s

d = Durability of jobs;
 V_p = Present valuation as [S-s] staffs;
 P_r = Probability of regular contributions of expatriation’s into the architecture of [S-s];

Each stage is characterized by a different construed reality, set of interpretive tasks and frame of reference. During bL_l , no final picture is available to the sub ordinate staffs due to the lack of communications between different critical nodes of organization. During dL_w , due to the fact of an embedded interaction on a regular basis between the critical nodes, some clues on organizational certainties emerge out. During hL_w , different individualized paths are followed to reach the same goal. The following sections discuss each stage in detail.

A (i) Blind Lane Linking

This stage is marked by lack of organizational communications between different critical nodes which are responsible for successful management of the concerned PPP project. Therefore, there is zero level inter organizational interactions between the employees of public and private partners. The subordinate staffs of both ends posses only one type of knowledge; for government

employees is K_c devoid of K_s (See Fig.1) and for private employees that is K_s devoid of K_c . Naturally, the final picture is available to none. As one employee (g-e) said,

One day I went to the Sadar³ office at Tamluk for official purpose. I observed there a huge stock of computer equipments and furniture's had been dumped corner side into the office premises. On enquiry, one replied that these things would be utilized for the computerization of our offices though he had no clear idea about what would be going on there finally. I can remember now, eventually, I came back home with a confused mind (Installation of [S-s])⁴.

This stage is also characterized by a series of disconnected pieces of instructions (U; See Fig.1) from respective higher authorities. As one employee (p-e) said,

We had been verbally instructed to go to the project sites⁵ and to send back configuration – specification numbers of the installed hardwares to H.Q. at Tamluk for the purpose of keeping the records of the same We did not have any complete chart on dos and don'ts (Installation of [S-s]).

There has been lack of reciprocal understanding and mutual perception over other's operation (U; See Fig.1). Actually in a complex project like PPP, extensive cross – functional and cross – organisational interaction is crucial. In the absence of it, there would be a natural tendency for one partner to bypass the organizational communication channels of others. This is a generic problem among hybrids (Borys and Jemison, 1989; Chatterjee, 1991). As one employee (p-e) said,

It was one day, you know, for the purpose of repairing a hardware equipment I was directed by our systems – engineer to move to Tamluk. I worked there hard day long but when returned to this site, one senior staff (g-e) asked me with whose permission I left office? I had an immediate gut feelings to be sandwiched between two bosses (Hybrid hierarchy).

One peculiarity of any PPP project is that it combines resources of both partners and consequently creates a new domain. In the presence of uncertainty and mutual interactions there is ambiguity over proper dividing lines, enhanced by countless rumours and suspicions which may culminate in 'turf protection' (Jennings and Krane, 1994). As two employees (g-e) said,

We were not sure what was going to happen. In addition, there had been a common rumour of losing jobs because we didn't have enough computer literacy. Then what would be our probable tasks structure? We had hard earned knowledge and expertise on our core department task but then, at the initial stage all those seemed to valueless. Moreover, we were on the verge of retirement, so could not motivate ourselves to learn new things (New tasks structure and staffing pattern).

When I sensed that we could not avoid automation I stated, you know de-prioritizing traditional mode of manual handling of routine tasks performances. Rather, I concentrated on bearing desperately software applications. There was none to motivate me. I am largely a self taught (Desk sharing).

The primary interpretive task of subordinate staffs, at this stage, is 'speculation' (t;See.Fig.1). As they try to develop understanding, they must piece together the scattered information into a 'coherent whole' frame of reference. That cognition over the need for piecing together ill fitted information is likely to continue (t;See.Fig.1) until an affordable status of mutual interactions and interdependency is co- created or a new comfortable PPP reality is construed.

TABLE 2

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF COMPLEXITY – EVENTS AROUND PPP PROJECT OF AUTOMATED SERVICE DELIVERY ^a

³ District Head Quarter in traditional Administrative sense.

⁴ Excerpts are followed by the name of event to which they pertain.

⁵ Here 'sites' imply the Government offices where [S-s] had been installed under the PPP project

Installation of [S-s]	Hybrid hierarchy	New task structure and staffing pattern	Desk sharing	Hybrid work culture ^b
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g-e: At the initial stage there were rumours about loss of jobs because we lacked skills and experience for software application.

p-e: We had been provided a short training programme on data entry only but had no idea about core departmental tasks, for that we often committed silly mistakes. They (g-e) also did the same.

(g-e) During the first wave which were rumours later on proved to be wrong. We just kept doing our routine jobs.

p-e: After the initial shock, the office climate started improving now I have us such get feelings as before.

p-e: At the initial stage we had to prove our employee identity by brining consent letter from our project manager

p-e: We were instructed to directly inform our systems engineer whenever there would be any hardware fault detected.

g-e: One day I found a stock shortage of a critical particular consumable required for everyday functional operation. Why did not they (p-e) informed us in advance? Why often they refused to communicate any problem through proper channel of Government administration?

p-e: One day, there had been a serious [S-s] problem at an office situated at the remote corner of this district. They (g-e) helped us a lot to be safe guarded against possible public grievances.

g-e: Previously, tasks were allotted as per seniority. After automation, that picture was made upside down. We did not have enough, computer literacy hence losing prestige and status as senior staffs.

p-e: We were basically [S-s] staffs. At the initial stage they tried to substitute us even though they had no previous experience in handling the systems. I can remember now, though we were contractual staffs we missed cozy touch from their (g-e) senior members.

g-e: Even once that time came when we were not given any scope to operate any automated file. Though, I have sympathy for them because they are the *bhumiputras*^c of this district like us.

p-e: At the initial stage, some superior authorities helped me a lot to learn core departmental tasks.

g-e: There were none to motivate me to learn basics of [S-s]. As a beginner I randomly entered the software files to know operational titbits. I am largely a self taught as a [S-s] staff.

g-e: Even sometimes, I selfimposed sort of pseudo competition with them (p-e) to test my level of expertise in handling [S-s].

p-e: Now we can understand each other better. During common dining or official rituals like farewell of retired government staff, we used to get ourselves together. Then, the conflict level appears to be reduced. Even, sometimes, we shared our workloads.

p-e: We think ourselves as a team because we are basically [S-s] staff appointed on a contractual basis and our (p-e) collective aim is to be perfect and flawless in handling systems.

g-e: We can't ignore the [S-s] for improved service delivery. Besides, when general people comment that due to present style of office decorating and for the cause of computerization, our office get up resembles that of corporate sector, we feel proud.

^a g-e = government employee's ; p-e = private employee.

^b the event was in progress at the time of this research.

^c sons of the soil.

A (ii) Double Way Linking

Following the stage of blind lane linking is double way linking, the interpretational stage during which a complexity event is 'standardized'. Traditional and routine explanation of what a complexity – event will personally mean to situated actors of PPP reality characterize corrective interpretations at this stage which is marked by a vice – versa mechanism between two ends. In other words, presumptions about 'what will be' and 'what has been' are mutually derivable from each other. As one employee (g-e) said,

Gradually I started coming out of my initial gut feeling and started presuming with 'a cool brain that as because I had a longer period that is 18 years of service to be retired and as because I had an expertise on core departmental tasks, if I could learn software application properly, I could be an adept [S-s] staff (Installation of [S-s]).

While blind lane linking stage is marked by 'lack of common history' (Borys and Jemison, 1989), this stage is marked by 'expanding interactional history' based upon the assumption that mutual experience (S_q ; see.Fig.1) will reduce the risks of conflict (d ; see.Fig.1). This is a sort of reflexivity on the part of the subordinate staffs who resort to enacted social activities where by they create and maintain the common place – situations following remembered past of embeddedness. As one employee (p-e) said,

One day a hardware repairing was required at this site. I had been called over phone to attend immediately. But then I was on an official tour to attend another site at the distant corner of this district of Purba Medinipur. I contracted a senior staff (g-e) of this site with whom I reside in the same locality; therefore we have regular social contact in between us. He understood my problem promptly and managed the problem for the time being (hybrid hierarchy).

Individuals react primarily from pre-programmed cognitions representing past occurrences (Taylor and Fiske, 1978). Here, these authors argue that this parallels the notion of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985). As two employees (p-e) said,

One day there was common dining programme in this office. It was scheduled on a particular day. But I asserted that I couldn't join it for some personal prescheduled assignment. That party was cancelled. I felt at home for that. I sensed consequently that they (g-e) received me as a family member. (New tasks structure and staffing pattern)

Those we are of same generation, now share our work related problems and emotions. Even during heavy workload, they (g-e) share the burden with us (Desk sharing).

Therefore, the primary interpretive task for the subordinate staffs of this stage is 'standardization' and 'script formation' (Gioia and Poole, 1984) based upon the assumption of 'mutual experience' (Rosenberg and Stern, 1971) and 'mutual learning' (Walker, 1972).

A (iii) High Way Linking

The final interpretive stage is high way linking, during which a complexity event around a PPP project is evaluated by the subordinate staffs by the representative of 'stored risk assessment knowledge'. Therefore, this stage is characterized by a combination of different individualized cognition on accessing to the same hybrid PPP resource i.e. reaching a given goal through different paths. There is different entry and departure point. As three employees (g-e) said,

Now we are more experienced and skilled in handling software application. Thus, we have no anxiety on losing jobs because we are permanent employees (installation of [S-s]).

We have sympathy for them (p-e) because they are appointed on a contractual basis (hybrid work culture).

There is a common conjecture that they (p-e) will be fired after the expiration of their contract period. What is the need of it? Their management can set up a central core group at their H.Q. at Tamluk by appointing them there with a store room of hardware equipments so that whenever there would be a requirement of staffing they could be deputed there (hybrid hierarchy).

This stage is characterized by network governance based on social interaction where friction is assumed being a natural part of relationship and where complexity event is intertwined with how informal people relate is relation. As three employees (p-e) said,

We don't know what is going to happen in future. Again, though we do the same routine job on [S-s] with them (g-e), there is discrimination on pay structure (Desk sharing).

General public assume we are the permanent staffs of this office. But this is not case. We are staffs of our project. (Hybrid work culture).

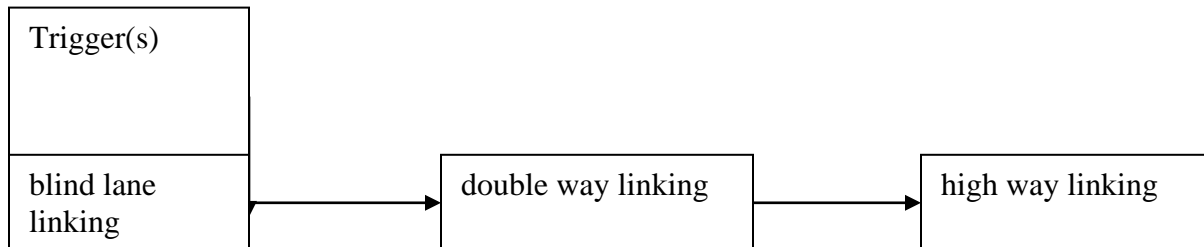
Though now we have friendly relation with them (g-e) our career related problems are different. We remain a team within a team (New tasks structure and staffing pattern).

Thus, the final interpretive task on complexity event is 'risk assessment' where there is no closure to the experience. The construed reality during this stage consisted of continuous evaluation of the positive and negative consequences of some aspects of a PPP – event until more information is forth coming.

B. How are Changing Viewpoints of Subordinate Staffs Linked to the Shifting Notion of Complexity Events Around a PPP Reality?

In addition to three stages in the interpretation of complexity – events, the data from this researcher also manifested the processes that move the situated actors of a particular reality studied here from one interpretive stage to another culturally designed cognitive system, which is typical to Indian world view and which parallels the notion of cognitive consensuality (Gioia and Sims, 1986) identifies a socially constructed crisis endangering the very survival of a group appear to precipitate such shifts. These events are akin to triggering events which activate the negative influence of harmful internal conditions accumulated in the stage of blind – lane – linking (${}_bL_1$). Figure 2 repents the process of shifting from one stage of interpretation to another.

FIGURE 2
PROCESS OF SHIFTING FROM ONE STAGE OF INTERPRETATION TO ANOTHER



Indians are believed to have a cognitive consensuality over strong need for power (nP). Sinha (1982) has traced the backward linkage of such nP in (a) the physical proximity in which Indians live for generations; (b) the pervasive poverty; and (c) the caste system. They feel more comfortable in their primordial groups and social collectives. Due to the fact of restricted spatial mobility they tend to interact continuously and at several levels. The interactions lead to social comparisons of almost everything that personally and socially matters. Hence, one cognizes that resources are always quite limited which is required to be cornered in one's favour. To do so one requires power and to achieve it successful one enacts to cultivate a network of resourceful persons. Thereafter, an enactment of continuous vigilance against any threat to the power is necessary. In addition to this or in congruency to this typical Indian cognition pattern, the caste system provides a perpetual scheme to categorize people into own (*apana*) and others (*paraya*). 'Apana' people are members of primordial groups (*Kauma samaj*) who may be trusted. They constitute the ingroups. The resources acquired outside are given away generously to 'apana' people who, in turn, show dependency on the powerful ingroup members.

It seemed in this research that when a complexity event around hybrid PPP resources which was always sensed as limited by the subordinate staffs had directly affected the 'apana' group interests interpretive shifts gained momentum for the purpose of limiting the damages done. Therefore, the first trigger event begins to move individuals into a state where cultivation of a network of resourceful persons is required. The second trigger event begins to move individuals to maintain a balance of power (Sharma, 2008) with an enactment of vigilance over hybrid PPP resource.

B. (i) Shifting to Double Way Linking

The installation of [S-s] under the scheme of a PPP project signalling that an event will occur triggers the interpretive shift from blind lane linking to double way linking. For example, replacing old and traditional office furniture used for manual performance of tasks altered by new and most sophisticated furniture required for computerization of the work process confirmed that something new was going to be happened. But 'what will this mean to us?' and 'How do we fit in that new organizational reality?' are the affective common reactions fuelling the interpretive shift. As three employees (g-e) said,

We cared a lot that something new was going on there. A brief training programme was held at Tamluk arranged by GOWB but the trainers had been from an organization of Central government (Hybrid hierarchy).

Everyday, after completing our manual performance of traditional pattern of work we used to sit before client computers to practise (Hybrid work culture).

They (p-e) also started coming and practicing the same thing (New tasks structure and staffing pattern).

The typical prevailing office culture and knowledge of core departmental tasks were 'foreign' to the private employees. They had no idea how to link their skill in handling software application to the core departmental tasks. 'Should we know it or not?' and 'To what extent are we to learn it?' are the affective reactions for them. One of them said,

We were given a short training on data entry only by own organization and sent to this site. We had no idea about the ensuing work culture (Hybrid work culture). At the initial stage whenever I was directed to entry some new data and to open an automated file, I used to learn the cause behind this action from them (g-e). (New tasks structure and staffing pattern).

Now, we have gathered some experience over core department knowledge. They (g-e) also have learnt many things of computer applications. The main operating staffs i.e. those we operate everyday the same [S-s] belong to the same generation which facilitates us exchanging our respective expertise (Desk sharing).

Thus, shifting to double way linking confirms the cultivation of a network of subordinate staffs who have computer literacy. In this way a new 'apana' group has been formed.

B. (ii) Shifting to High Way Linking

This final interpretive shift occurs as time wears on and there is some signal that there is an event of continuous interaction on a regular basis. 'what is our present valuation as [S-s] staffs? (**V_p**; see Fig.1) or 'will we be provided chance to contribute our expertise in future (**P_r**; See. Fig.1)? are the common affective reactions. As two employees (p-e) said,

I am now expert in handling a particular software file. I can do it with a highest possible speed. I know, whenever I take casual leave or remain absent for time being the normal speed of service delivery gets slowing down (Desk sharing).

Still we have to work together for coming few years. There is conflict, misunderstanding with them (g-e) and it will be there. Due to the fact of regular interaction with them now some degrees of interdependency and reciprocity crop up there in between us. We should spit out the gut feelings of previous bitter experiences. Gone are those days. These are of no use new because we also piece together some sorts of expertise on core departmental tasks though if we really be kicked out after the expiration of contract period; all these would be of no use to us (New tasks structure and staffing pattern).

This shifting stage is characterized by subordinate staff's social need to come full circle and to calculate the risk whether the complexity event around newly constituted 'apana' group had

been advantageous or disadvantageous. An enactment of continuous vigilance over hybrid resources produced out of PPP reality is felt utterly required here. As employee (g-e) said, Though I have sympathy for them (p-e) because there are younger than me plus are 'bhumiputras' like us of this district Purba Medinipur, still I think now we are self sufficient in handling efficiency the [S-s]. (Installation of [S-s]).

Implications

Though in fast growing but capital scare economy like West Bengal, PPP is a viable alternative to public funding by inviting private sector investment in service delivery sector of GOWB, very little research has been effectuated so far on project – complexity issues in interactional terms between the subordinate staffs from both public and private ends. This research contributes to the existing PPP literature an understanding of complexity dynamics emphasizing the cognition pattern of the employee engaged in routine jobs for upkeep [S-s]. Therefore, to the best of the knowledge of the authors of this study, it is the first time there is a triangulation on the level of theory between cognition pattern of subordinate staffs on identification of shifting notion of interactional events and project complexity around a PPP reality in Indian context.

This research also indicates that project complexity might alternatively be viewed, not as an obstacle to overcome, but as inherent elements of the cognitive transition evolving over time based on socially constructed organizational events.

The research has also implications for further study for two reasons. First; GOWB has not launched PPPs only at service delivery sectors but also at construction and health sectors. But this study focuses only on service delivery sector's complexity events. Second; this research concentrated on drawing a portrait of subordinate staff interpretation: it is not known whether there stages describe the evolving interpretations of subordinate staffs only because all organizational members including government officers and project managers also enact their PPP realities. Hence, further studies are required to explore these issues.

Conclusions

Like master pieces on organizational sense making theorization (for e.g. Weick, 1979; Daft and Weick, 1984) this research relates the history of views of key complexity – events in one PPP project site. That history was stirred by the shifting notion of complexity which contains the cognitive logic that triggered subordinate staffs' understanding and adjustment during the process of change and predicting the future. As one employee (g-e) said,

No one is self sufficient or could be. Every one needs other to assist or to help during exigency. Previously, we had social contact in between us. Now software does every thing leaving little space for exchanging work related emotions in between us accentuated by the heterogeneity of hierarchy and staffing pattern.

That 'to and fro' motions between past and present provide that sense of history.

Appendix

Interview Questions ^a

Questions were as follows: Tell me about a specific complexity event from your point of view – what happened before, during or after the event occurred?

Before the event –

What it was remember like to be in the office / project site at this time?

Can you any incidents that preceded that specific complexity event? Will you please describe it?

Please tell me a story on what did other staffs around you do then.

What seemed important or significant to you at that time?

Why all these appeared significant to you?

During the occurrence of the event –

When a specific interactional complexity event happened, what do you recall most?

How did you react to it? Did most people react in this way? If not, how they reacted differently and why?

What other interactional events accompanied that specific events?

What concerned you most at that time?

After the event –

After some period has passed, what do you recall most?

What seemed most important to you at that time? Why were these important?

Please tell me a story what concerned you or others at that time?

What did the specific event overall signify? Did it mean some thing?

Did you exchange that overall meaning with staffs around you? Did they express differently? If so, why?

Down the memory lane over your remarks –

Tell me a story if you would like to add anything relevant.

^a The interviews were taken in vernacular Bengali dialect which is the mother tongue of both the present authors and the subordinate staffs studied. Therefore, the researcher carefully translated every thing from Bengali to English during the research stages which was a very difficult task, because it was not easy to find the same meaning to some Bengali words and sentences in English. For example, the dialogue like ‘*ami jani computer mane kom kharcha*’ though apparently implies ‘organizational downsizing by means of budget control’ still carries slightly different perspective in the context of indigenous stock of knowledge through what we learn about the empirical world. These shortcomings were supplemented by additional unstructured interview questions and paying heed to organizational stories they told on complexity events.

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