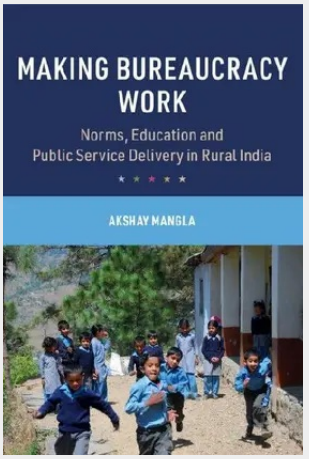
Mangla

Making Bureaucracy Work



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

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