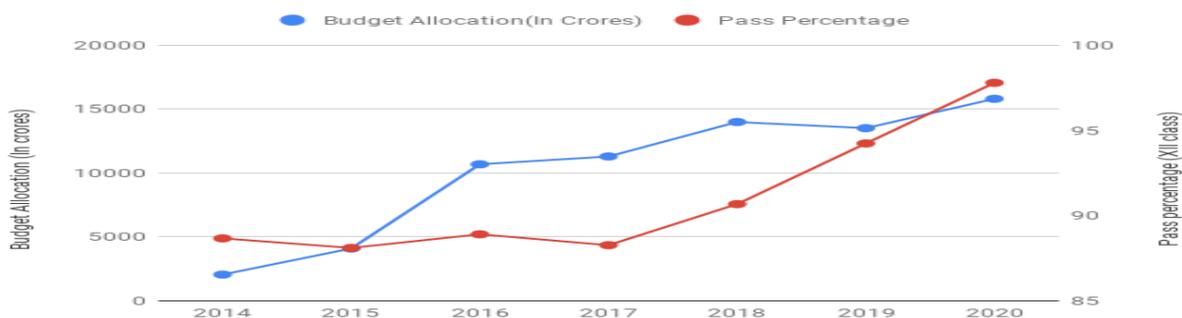


POLICY ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION IN DELHI

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Introduction

For the last few years when the Central Board of Secondary Education declared results for the class 10th and 12th, Delhi government makes it a point to show off the success of its government schools. The ministers and the party workers celebrate the ever increasing number of students passing the exam from the government schools and the ever climbing percentages of the said students. This year too the Delhi government released the following graph showing the correlation between the increasing education budget in Delhi with the performance of government school students in the board exams.



The education minister himself is seen quoting the increase of pass percentages of students since they took charge of the government school system. When compared to the pre-AAP education system where the pass percentage of government schools was around 69.38% in comparison to 89.45% of the private schools in the NCR, the current increase is an appreciable step.

The education department of the Delhi government under the leadership of Manish Sisodia lay out significant plans in the form of policy to achieve best results in the government schools. The policy of education itself is a multi-layered document informing of various stakeholders and their responsibilities. It also elaborates on the networks established by the government to improve the response of government in schools.

Increasing the number of passed students however is not the only way to look at the education policy. While rooted in the tangible goals of learning and assessment in the classroom, education as a policy matter has to have cognizance of the long-term objectives. The constant struggle between the two types of goals are visible when the quality of education is placed in measurable entities like marks or grades. This also holds true for the policies where numbers are the only pedestal from which it is formatted, executed and implemented. To decipher, however, the relevance of policy, in a socio-political and economic system, it is pertinent to reflect on the vision that was set up before its conception. It is also required to understand the detailed plan of action that accompanies a policy till it starts to yield results. A good example of this is the education policy of 1986 followed by the programme of Action 1992.

The National policy of Education 1986 and Programme of Action 1992 are the milestones of Indian education system. Both the documents extensively lay out the plans to deliver education to every child in India. There is an extensive emphasis on equalising the educational opportunities for the scheduled castes and tribes. The policies before the POA 1992 have addressed the issues of access but are unable to come up with specific programmes to resolve the same. To universalise the primary education the government launched operation blackboard the government made sure that physical access to education was guaranteed for the children in rural areas. In 1992 by suggesting the Common Minimum programme the then central government started a discussion on common learning standards that were unachievable by the students from marginal groups due to the quality of education in the universal programme. There was guaranteed access through previous policies, but it was not serving the children equally.

Given the background of equalising policies, the government made the 86th amendment in the Indian constitution to make education a fundamental right that was followed by the launch of the programme named *Sarv Shiksha abhiyaan* in 2002 to universalise the elementary education. At the core of this programme was a previously designed District Primary Education Programme (1993-94) that aimed to cover each district for primary education. DPEP reached almost 272 districts of 18 states before the introduction of SSA. Latter aimed to reach at community level (every 5 kms). One of the most significant achievements of SSA was to have an increased number of minority students enrolling in the schools. Amongst many policies and programmes, SSA proved to be one of the most effective for the children of minority and scheduled caste and tribes. *Sarv Shiksha Abhiyaan* (translated as campaign or movement for education for all) was a programme to achieve the objective of complete elementary education in the time frame of ten years in India. The policy itself is a framework that the governments utilizes to take certain action. The *Abhiyaan* was a constitutional amendment with an executive part etched into its existence. It talked of moving beyond policies into action. To initiate it the administration of the schools was decentralised to include local bodies in the decision making process. Units were created at the cluster level then block and district level to redefine the role of local. Into the various levels were divided the responsibility of developing curriculum, teaching learning materials and providing educational support.

The provisions in SSA are reflective of the lessons learnt by the Programme of Action 1992 and DPEP 1993-94. Both the programmes point out to the need to decentralise the administration in education. In the broad level policy making it was observed that the perspectives from the local level failed to find their place. The reconceptualist paradigm inspired the policies on education to be more inclusive of the local identities (Popkewitz's 2003 & 2007). It essentially means that educational institutions and practitioners were appealed to define children in a detailed manner along with their individual contexts and diverse backgrounds.

Within the philosophical goals the tangible objectives were enmeshed in the SSA. The policy document seems to be cleverly divided to balance the measurable and unmeasurable goals that can be produced as tangible results at the end of a policy cycle, that is also a feature of education policies world wide (Gross 1964). A critical account of the past policies also reflects that long term intangible goals need to be put on hold to make space for measurable short-term goals that are better suited as a pitch to appeal to a time bound democratic government system (Dror 1970). The SSA is a good example of placing the past policies into measurable units. The objectives like universal primary education till 2007, complete elementary education and retention till 2010 were measured constantly to understand the applicability of the education policy.

A separate department was established to look after the objectives of the *abhiyaan* that were divided into - monitoring and research; gender, ECCE and special groups; pedagogy, teacher education and capacity building; alternative and innovative education; recruitment and their policy matters; planning and community mobilisation; budget; and civil works. The detailed level of bureaucracy initiated in the field of education was to produce yearly reports on performance, achievements and target acquisitions. SSA called for assistance from the NGO sector too, as they did play an important role as stakeholders in the policy making.

The *abhiyaan* was a step after the policy was made where governments at state and central level were ordered to accomplish goals and report. Districts were asked to prepare and deliver yearly plans to work on the issues of retention, drop-outs and stagnation in the classes. The plans were also to be consulted for the funds and capacities available in the districts which were to be closely supervised. The plans were scrutinized by the appraisal team for all states. In 2009 the Delhi government produced a document listing their achievements under the SSA. The target based infrastructure development till that time had targeted to build ten schools, 1238 classrooms, 68 drinking water facilities and 610 toilets. They completed 2 full school buildings, 1053 classrooms, 400 toilets till the time of the reporting. The target of drinking water facilities alone was achieved in the nine years of the campaign.

The report noted that 20,000 disabled students were benefited till 2009. Free textbooks were provided to 'all' students who are admitted in the government schools in Delhi till elementary level. Apart from the in-school students, the abhiyaan also finds a need to focus on the out of school children in ways to attract them into the schools. The community reach programme where the government officials personally meet the parents to understand their educational requirements. In Delhi 15,20,272 families were contacted in 9 years to gather inputs on the needs of inclusive education.

ICT based programmes like khulja sim sim (KSS) was initiated by the Delhi government. This along with the chalta firta school (CFS) and bridge courses paved a way for students to take interest in schools and the idea of learning. 1,10,446 is the number of students noted by the Delhi government who benefited from its out of school programmes. KSS and CFS are special programmes initiated by the state government of Delhi. The programmes were welcomed for their innovative style to reach the under-privileged students.

The report vaguely refers to Building as a learning Aid initiative along with Computer aided learning and learning kits. All these programmes were designed to encourage innovation in classroom teaching. The schools were given a fund of rs 5000 and teachers were given 500 rs each to create teaching learning material. The innovations were restricted by the curriculum at all stages. The programme promised a teacher student ratio of 1:40. It also advised the allocation of education budget towards civil works, teacher training and development of teaching-learning material. The abhiyaan in Delhi and otherwise do not offer any strict provisions for recruiting full time teachers to achieve the deliverables. The delhi report and the abhiyaam itself take pride in recruiting para-teachers, assistant teachers, shiksha mitr despite the failings getting noted by the DPEP programme. The budget in the IXth plan was divided 85:15 for the centre to state that was revised to 75:25 in the Xth plan. The teacher salary was understood to be divided 50:50 amongst both the governments. However, the permanency issue still is not resolved. Even in the National Education Policy 2020 the government struggles to address the issue of non-permanent teachers in more than a cliched sentence.

The new education policy of 2020 also holds as a reflecting mirror to the state policies on the matter. Being a subject of the concurrent list the responsibility of creating policies for education is decentralised. The national level policies often decide the flow in which the states will structure their policy arguments. Hence to analyse the Delhi policy on education I will observe the previous debates on the matter of education at the national levels. Post-Independence several commissions and committees were appointed by the government to restructure education and change the system of learning, schooling and higher education in India. I will be basing my discussion on the following documents.

1. National Policy on Education: A Programme of Action, 1986
2. National Policy on Education: A Programme of Action, 1992
3. Sarv (Samagra) Shiksha abhiyan amendment 2001-02
4. NCF 2005
5. Right to Education Act 2010

The policy makers: Aam Admi Party

Aam Admi Party has been constantly reiterated as a change in the established political discourse of India (Roy 2014, Tripathy 2017). Established in 2012 out of the anti-corruption movement, the *Aam Admi* Party registered electoral win in Delhi in 2013 and then in 2015. The elected government of the party in Delhi dwells on the promises of providing exceptional public services like education, water, electricity amongst others to all citizens at a reduced price. The party can be seen to place its opinions on neither of the extremes of right and left.

Most of their work is based on research and expert analysis. For instance, the education sector has seen inputs from Manish Sisodia and Atishi Marlena, latter being a grass-root level worker in the field of education graduated from University of Oxford. The deliberations focused in one

sector led by the experts in the areas lay down a strong foundation to work with the present provisions in any field. The decentralisation of power in policy making has been one of the achievements of the present government in Delhi.

Access of policy provisions by the general public has worked in favour of AAP in terms of popularity. In their current terms the party has worked on increasing their revenues by their alleged adherence to the anti-corruption policies. The fiscal increase is impressively presented to the public. The expenditure on the basic services take shape in the form of policies which are announced to reach the people with ease.

The policy on Education by AAP sees a significant knowledge of the provisions made in the past for the sector. An important contribution of SSA in the current policy has been to focus on children in pedagogy and decentralise the administration in education. All schools in Delhi amalgamate formal structures of administration with School Management Committees involving parents and other members of communities in its functioning. The SMCs are able to mould the functioning in the school based on the local perspectives.

Reading campaign is a programme to support students with poor reading abilities. By arranging various programmes that run throughout the year including in the summer camps and reading *melas*, which are other schemes of the government in the education policy. Not just by arranging special programmes like these, the government of Delhi has focused a lot of its attention on the everyday learning at school as well. The policy focuses on pedagogy by the means of *pragati* series and happiness curriculum. The *pragati* series of supplementary learning material is developed on the ideologies of child centric curriculum (Dewey 1899, 1901, 1923).

Initiatives are also taken in the pre-schooling component of learning that is another sector where private schools dominate. By establishing KG classes in 432 schools and Nursery in 304 schools in Delhi the government has shown its dedication to the sector. There are programmes for training the teachers of the pre-school. The government has shown a keen interest in regulating the private schools for fees and transparency in the process of admission of economically weaker sections at all levels.

Delhi government reached out to the students itself to reach out to the students in need. It helped students who cannot give regular exams due to physical or social constraints. This is one of the programmes that is discussed extensively in the media. The Government has certainly based its policy on the best practices in the field of education by following the footsteps of the oldest working organisations in the area.

There are schemes like *chunauti* and reading campaign for the children who are already in school. *Chunauti* is specifically designed 'to bridge learning gaps for children in class sixth, seventh and eighth' (2015:2). The relevance of these three classes is most of the schools run by Delhi government start from class sixth (after primary). Students from various schools like Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools and private schools may not have the same standard of education that is expected by the host schools. The children are divided into three categories according to their performance. All three groups are taught in such a way that they must be able to perform well in ninth class examination. The policy documents the success of this programme by noting that results have increased significantly in the target class in the schools. *Buniyaad*, which is a bridge course for drop out students (to induct them back into schooling), has gained significant media attention. Programmes like bridge courses are practiced by ground level organizations in rural and backward areas like by *Eklavya* in Madhya Pradesh and *digantar* and *bodh* in Rajasthan. These are successful models of educational attainment in adversity.

Infrastructure in education, in India, was absent from a better part of the history of education policies. Around the time when operation blackboard was introduced the concept of school was as basic as one teacher and one blackboard. The primary focus was to reach to every child with as little resource as possible. It seems a novel idea but eventually the real issues started coming up. In the case of girl students for example, only one blackboard was quite unsuccessful in retaining

them in the school. For a long time, the educational theorists keep on pointing to the need of basic infrastructure to keep them from dropping out.

Ray and Dutta (2017) have shown that separate toilets for girl and boy students have a significant impact on the enrolment and drop-out of adolescent females. Delhi government took a strict cognizance of this issue in their effort to improve infrastructure in Delhi. As noted in table one hundred per cent of schools in Delhi have toilets with separate seats for girls and boys. This is not excessively mentioned in the policy document as a gender issue. But there has to be recognition from the literature that has regularly pointed out the need for toilets in schools has an impact on the education of girls.

Delhi government has spent almost twenty-five crores on the infrastructure development of schools in Delhi. They promised to build five hundred schools but were unable to do it due to lack of land in the NCT. Instead they build eight thousand classrooms in the existing schools to improve their functioning. Creation of language, mathematics and social science laboratories is an achievement of Delhi education policy. They also worked on the laboratories for vocational education playgrounds and swimming pools in their plan to expand infrastructure in schools.

Infrastructure development has been taken as a cognizant point of schooling the Delhi policy of education. Building of new schools, classrooms, three-tier libraries, sports and other infrastructure is again a hugely publicised achievement of the government that they take pride in. The change in the way that the public sees government schools is commendable effort. The growth comes with creation of new positions like of the Estate managers who liaison with government departments about the school's infrastructure.

Infrastructure Norms	No of Schools	No of classrooms	No of functional toilet seats		% of schools with functional drinking water	% of schools with library	% of schools with playground
MCD	1,692	23,625	9,663 (M)	8,921 (F)	100%	97%	84%
State Government	1,019	32,043	10,487 (M)	11,130 (F)	100%	100%	91%

Table 1: Infrastructure

One fairly obvious comparison with the state government schools is of the Municipal Corporations. Both have different governing bodies within Delhi. As informed by one of the informants, 'MCD and State Government Schools are often seen to be connected by virtue of the population that send their children to these schools. MCD schools that are up to primary level feed to the state government schools. The data, that was not disclosed publicly by the Delhi government, shows that State Government schools outperform the MCD schools in infrastructure.

The shift in the stand on infrastructure is a revolutionary idea of the education policy. Another achievement is to establish School Management Committees in the schools of Delhi for effective management. In 97.87 percent of the MCD schools and 99.51 % of the state government schools have these functioning committees. Section 21 of RTE act (2009) mandates formation of these committees in all schools. By decentralising the management of schools, these committees become an effective way to manage the infrastructure and other issues in the schools.

Teacher Education, Training, and in Service development

The policy discusses the well-being of teachers at a great length. There is a vision to create a working environment where teachers and other members of the school perform their best. The education policy is also influenced by the fact that there are multiple stake holders in the field of

education, some of whom are not vocal due to their age and position in the society. The yield of education, as a process, is also different for all of them. Then again there are various kinds of investments, in form of money, aspirations and time that pours into the whole process. Other larger interests like the economic aspirations of India, changing requirements of markets and larger socio and geo-political scenarios are also vested in the whole process. In this complex situation education policy must be seen as a document that is birthed with an engagement of historical and societal pressures. It is a document that must reflect on the future aspirations of the democratic thought and market economy. The policy hence only become relevant by placing itself in the cornucopia of multiple objectives and targets that are spread thin to appeal to as many stake holders as possible.

The first step towards achieving the goals of efficient training of the people involved in the process of education. The first policy on education (1948-49) worked on reviewing the curriculum for then existing teacher training courses in India to change it to teacher education. The concept of training implies an element of trial and error. However, by calling it teacher education the commission put forth the importance in the discipline of education as the traditional ones. It was proposed that teachers should be created with an awareness of the local environment that they are going to teach in the future.

The pre-service education rules are decided by the centre. State of Delhi also follows the same preservice education criteria for recruiting teachers. The state however has an exemplary initiative to work towards strengthening in-service teacher-education. There has been a historical focus on localising the teacher education. The Delhi Government however changed the perspective by introducing the opportunities to gather experience from international and other experts. The role of teachers has been made to gain prominence in the new education policy of Delhi government. They work for developing the material. As well as engage with children in the summer camps. The camps are a place to have '*kuch masti kuch padhai*' (2015: 5). The teachers also have an active role in the *buniyaad* programme. *Buniyaad* is developed for the students who do not have comparable learning capabilities to other children. The schools provide special assistance to these children by providing them bridge classes for three months before the session starts. Another provision in the form of the Core Academic Unit focuses on innovation.

One of the novel initiatives in the education policy of Delhi government has been its happiness curriculum. It is practiced as a special one period every day in the classroom. The curriculum as the name suggests is to allow students to become more creative and reflective people. This is done by telling the students stories and conducting other mindful activities in the classroom. The teachers take the role of activity partner in this special class. For higher classes there is a provision for students to explore their talents and prepare them for vocations after school. By providing spoken English classes and vocational education counselling government claims to have infused confidence in the young children to excel in the world.

After an extensive programme for the students the policy also turns its focus on the other components of the education system in Delhi. Special training programmes for principals and teachers are organised by the government. They are encouraged to participate in contact programmes with management institutions and leaders in the field of schooling. Also, initiatives teachers are supported to conduct their own research projects in the field of education. The mentor teacher programme involves teachers in the leadership roles to support their colleagues. Teacher development coordinator programme is a technical intervention with the help of STiR foundation, District Institute of Educational Training and SCERTs to focus on the professional development of the teachers across schools.

For the holistic development of the school leaders as individuals Delhi government organises workshops under their programme of *jivan vidya shivir*. Based on the co-existential philosophy of A Nagaraj. These workshops are a metaphysical contribution in the lives of people to whom we entrust our children with. The government[6] does not shy away from partnering with NGOs for

their expertise in the field of education. Various NGOs have worked in the schools of Delhi, at various levels, to provide their assistance in various aspects of schooling.

The teachers were selected to be sent to Singapore for new learnings in the field of quality education. Administrators also receive special training from management specialists from IIMA and Cambridge. By exposing the teaching staff to the international arena Delhi government has established a class of its own. This is one of a kind of initiative that brings a global perspective to the government schools of Delhi which was, till now, expected only of the international schools. The in-service component of teacher education is strongly recommended by education commissions and policies since 1964-66. But the exact nature of the in-service training is fairly open for interpretation and execution.

In-service captures the basic nature of education which is to grow and renew itself in every few years. With the changing times teachers need not just to revise the new content but also learn to get acquainted with the new ethos of the profession. It is especially true for the teachers who entered the profession at a lower qualification. The scheme to universalise education in Indian, since DPEP, has started a stream of underqualified recruitments of para teachers. These are known by different names in various states, some of famous ones being *shiksha mitr*, *vidyashahayak*, *shikshan sevaks* or contract teachers in Delhi (Kingdon and Rao 2010).

These truly are the underpaid warriors of education in India. Most of the para teachers do not adhere to the qualification as set by the government to be full-time permanent teachers in schools. They were supposed to fill in the gap that occurred due to sudden increase in demand for teachers due to policy changes when the previous policies were silent on the issue. This created a large force which was underqualified but has the responsibility towards increasing literacy rate in India. The nature of in-service education for these para teachers is at a local level, often taken care of by a strong NGO working in the area, like *Eklavya* in Madhya Pradesh and *Digantar* and *Bodh* in Rajasthan.

These NGOs work towards building and revising pre-service and in-service curriculum along with the implementation in coordination with the government. The Delhi government also chose some private players in the field of education in Delhi to guide them in this programme. The content of this training is stretched from being a mentor to the principles and mental health lectures to the teachers. This long and continuous in-service education has converted the teachers into a group which is inspired at various fronts for their jobs.

Teachers are also motivated to undertake research projects in their respective fields in schools. A research-based teaching experience promoted by the government aspires for a critical group of students that represent Delhi government schools at various arenas with pride. The teacher training initiatives are well grounded in research and promote a healthy learning environment. The teachers however are also one of the areas in which this government has been criticised a lot. As mentioned, the history of the education policy is such that a lot is already created which is underqualified but functioning the most important task in the education sector, I will discuss it in the next segment.

Another one of achievement in the field of employees of Delhi government schools is the introduction of new cadre of professionals like the counsellors and teachers for children with special needs. Along with the school management committee these professionals give school a holistic perspective about the school and community life in the contemporary times. Inclusion of mental health professionals is a welcoming step. The policy took cognizance of the issues like depression and increasing suicide rates amongst children to have taken such a step.

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