



Policy Capacity Matters for Capacity Development: Comparing Basic Education System in India and China

Speaker: Yifei Yan, LSE Fellow in Social Policy, Ph.D, National University Singapore

Chair: Madhurima Nundy, Assistant Director, ICS

Date: 7 January 2020

Venue: Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi

The speaker began by mentioning that her research was motivated by the question of how education governance could be better understood in theory, and ultimately, practiced in reality. To answer the question she chose to view it through the lens of policy capacity. She further explained that ‘policy capacity refers to the resources and capabilities across different levels to bring about effective policy solution.’ More specifically, her research was aimed at assessing policy capacity of teacher capacity-building. She further trifurcated the concept of policy capacity into three dimensions - Analytical Capacity (generate intelligence, commit to evidence based policy), Operational Capacity (use of appropriate policy instruments and arrangements to solve policy problems) and Political Capacity (align stakeholder goals and interest to gain support).

The speaker had chosen 33 schools in Delhi and 22 schools in Beijing as sample study subjects. The reasons for choosing Delhi and Beijing were first, both the cities have some kind of capacity building programs running, and second, because of the relatively similar governance structure. In Delhi the speaker had surveyed the Delhi government’s ‘pilot schools’. Teachers and principals of these pilot schools are selected for training programs organised abroad so as to provide them with better training and exposure. When comparing schools in both Delhi and Beijing the speaker mentioned that in terms of capacity building there are two dimensions: service training for teachers and teachers’ career development.

While in Delhi the training programs take place only during summer breaks, in Beijing they take place every semester. The other very stark difference between the training programs in the two cities is that in Delhi the most common program provider is State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT), which is an autonomous body of the government of Delhi, whereas in Beijing these programs are conducted by the schools itself along with the district level education authorities. As far as the involvement of state/provincial government is concerned, the Beijing Municipal government is in charge of two kinds of training: first, those given to advanced level teachers and second, training provided to weak schools which do not have the capacity to organise such programs on their own. Also, while NGOs contribute majorly in training programs in Delhi, in Beijing the involvement of NGOs is non-existent. With respect to career advancement, the structure in Delhi and Beijing is very different. In Delhi it’s a single, vertical structure, whereas in Beijing there are multiple structures, both horizontal and vertical.

The speaker further presented a comparative analysis between schools in Delhi and Beijing based on the above mentioned three dimensions of the teacher capacity-building. In terms of analytical capacity, the speaker's research indicated that in Delhi consultation with the teachers regarding their needs and preference were inadequate as only 10% of the total respondents were consulted, whereas in Beijing 31% respondents said that they were consulted. In Delhi, 96% of respondents felt that their training did not meet their needs, while in Beijing it was 50%. Teachers in both the cities felt that the training was inadequate on issues related to student affairs, management and parental involvement. As for the operational capacity aspect, which includes promotion intervals, quality of the training etc, Delhi's performance was rated Medium while Beijing was rated high. In Delhi, the respondents mentioned that the training was state dominated, in frequent and with long intervals, while in Beijing the training was comprehensive in nature. The other major issue in Delhi was the average promotional interval was as high as 79 months whereas in Beijing it was 33 months. With regards to the political capacity aspect, Delhi was rated medium because of factors like non-inclusion of guest teachers in the training programs and because the respondents felt that their career path did not reward professionalism. On the other hand, Beijing was rated medium-high because of factors involving fewer complaints regarding promotions not rewarding professional success. However, it was observed that the Beijing respondents felt that excessive competitiveness was extremely stressful for them.

The speaker concluded by mentioning that the major contributions of the research was highlighting the importance of teacher capacity building as well as conceptualizing policy capacity for effective teacher capacity building. Overall, the research indicated that in Delhi, operational capacity has critical capacity deficits, while in Beijing, analytical capacity is the major issue.

While answering various questions, the speaker observed that the NGOs performed more effectively when their involvement in training programs was complimentary to the governments. On the other hand, if the NGOs were a substitute to the government's programs, then they were less effective because of inadequate accountability of such NGOs. The speaker also pointed out that in Beijing, while municipal governments can publish materials on different subjects, the CCP centrally publishes textbooks for subjects like language, social sciences and humanities.

This report was prepared by Bihu Chamadia, Research Intern, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi.

Disclaimer: This report is a summary produced for purposes of dissemination and for generating wider discussion. All views expressed here should be understood to be those of the speaker(s) and individual participants, and not necessarily of the Institute of Chinese Studies.