



**Governance of Government Middle Schools in  
Beijing and Delhi: Teacher Training, Career  
Advancement and Stakeholder Communication**

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**ICS OCCASSIONAL PAPER NO. 42**

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**First published in 2020**

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## **Acknowledgement**

I am very grateful to the editors and reviewers for helpful comments, and to Dr. Anjana Mangalagiri for comments on an earlier draft. Results of the paper were presented at, amongst others, the International Conference on Inclusive Quality Education: Towards SDG4 and the Wednesday Seminars at the Institute of Chinese Studies. I am thankful to comments received from these conference and seminar participants.

# Governance of Government Middle Schools in Beijing and Delhi: Teacher Training, Career Advancement and Stakeholder Communication

## *Abstract*

*Effective management and utilization of fiscal, physical and human resources is of crucial importance in advancing the quality of basic education. In recent years, reforms of educational governance around the world have especially aimed to improve student learning outcomes by strengthening education accountability. However, reforms so far have overemphasized commanding and controlling teachers and schools. The equally important aspect of institutionalized support, albeit being part and parcel to a more comprehensive accountability relationship, is under-emphasized and underexplored. This paper examines these measures, especially in-service training, career advancement and communication among the stakeholders, as practiced in government middle schools of Beijing and Delhi, capital cities of India and China which have two of the largest basic education systems in the world. While the comparison reveals substantial variations in terms of the structure and providers of such support, common challenges within the two systems suggest that for the support to be effective and received positively, it needs to match the needs or incentives of the teacher recipients and advance their professional capacity.*

**Keywords:** *China, India, education governance, accountability, government schools*

## **Educational Governance and Accountability: Why It Matters**

The importance of basic education in economic and human development is increasingly acknowledged in both policy research and practice worldwide. With impressive progress made in universalizing basic (especially primary) education since 1990s, the policy goals of improving the performance of the basic education sector has shifted gradually from expanding access to consolidating quality and inclusiveness, which is incorporated as the fourth of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4). Whereas the goal of basic education has been duly updated reflecting and taking into account new situations and development, the relevant adjustment of policy measures to accomplish it is much slower. Not surprisingly, although input-based interventions from building more schools to providing more textbooks may contribute to the increase of student attendance (or the reduction of drop-outs), evidence is far from supportive regarding their contribution to the quality of learning (e.g. Elmore and Fuhrman 2001; Evans and Popova 2016; Mbiti 2016).

To fulfill the latter goal, it is realized over time that the *governance* process matters more than the inputs.<sup>1</sup> In other words, compared with the mere presence of fiscal, physical and human resources in education reforms, it is how they are managed and utilized that are more likely to make a difference in the quality and inclusiveness of basic education.

As accountability is increasingly emphasized to be an integrated component and key to good governance (Aucoin and Heintzman 2000; World Bank 2003), governance reforms in the basic education sector has especially focused on strengthening accountability as a way to improve the quality of student learning. Despite the prevalence of accountability reforms in developing and developed countries alike, a universal definition over the term “accountability” is yet to emerge. Referring to the public policy and administration literature, accountability can be understood as a social relationship between the ‘accountors’ and the ‘accountees’ regarding two activities. On one hand, the ‘accountors’ are required to answer to the ‘accountees’ for their actions/ inaction (Romzek and Dubnick 1987) or be responsible for certain consequences (Roberts 2002). On the other hand, accountability also requires that ‘accountees’ put effective sanctions on the “accountors” for the performance and response given previously. As will be seen later, while the literature has often emphasized punishment for the accountors’ failure or misconduct (Goetz and Jenkins 2001), it should be noted that such sanctions also demand that good performance be duly rewarded. Before that, relevant support should also be provided to facilitate and stimulate good performance from the “accountors”.

### **Accountability Mechanisms in Educational Governance**

Under this overarching, though implicit, understanding on education accountability, literature on this theme has treated accountability mainly as distinctive mechanisms. Just as the seminal works on social mechanisms define a mechanism as ‘the way in which the two sets of events or variables are linked to one another’ (Hedstrom and Swedberg 1998), nearly all accountability mechanisms have their own theoretical justifications on how they will lead to improved education outcomes. Typical accountability mechanisms examined in the literature include school-based management (SBM), exit exams, information disclosure and so on (Table 1, see also Yan 2019a).

Despite theoretical predictions, whether and to what extent accountability mechanisms are effective in facilitating student learning remain largely inconclusive (Evans and Popova 2016). Beyond the specific concerns raised on the

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<sup>1</sup>In Capano et al. (2015), governance is defined as a process ‘in which policy actors, including governments, combine to solve collective problems’. Fukuyama (2013) defines governance as ‘a government’s ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services.’ Taken together, educational governance can be understood as a process in which government and other actors design and implement relevant rules and other policy instruments so as to deliver quality and inclusive education service that ultimately improves students’ learning outcomes.

individual accountability mechanisms, existing studies on education accountability have more fundamentally laid emphasis on discipline and control (Yan 2019a). Control on schools and teachers is either exerted by the government through inspections or exit exams, or is increasingly expected from parents and other societal actors through measures such as SBM or by disclosing information to those actors. In contrast, the equally important dimensions of support and recognition from the accountees to the service providers are fairly underexplored. Even when supportive measures do get examined, the focus of empirical studies is mainly on short-term supportive measures, such as rewarding teacher performance financially in the form of year-end bonus.

**Table 1 Summary of Accountability Mechanisms in Basic Education**

Accountability Mechanisms	Theoretical Justifications	Concerns in Practice	Focus
School-Based Management (SBM)/ Educational Decentralization	Autonomy, participation=> social/client accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited discretion (“<b>partial</b> decentralization”);</li> <li>How autonomy is exercised matters</li> <li>Threshold of capacity needed</li> </ul>	Discipline, monitoring and control
Information Disclosure	Reduce information asymmetry (expecting parents to assert accountability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs to be clear and concise;</li> <li>Connection between info &amp; action;</li> <li>Collective action</li> </ul>	
Exit Exams	Information (e.g. for comparing student achievements across groups), incentive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unintended consequences</li> <li>Whether assessment/ test scores reflect learning</li> </ul>	
Inspection/ school visits	Ensure compliance with regulation; gain information about school performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unintended consequences</li> <li>Whether inspecting the core matter</li> <li>Teachers feeling insulted</li> </ul>	
Teacher (summative) evaluation	Ensure that teachers perform at their best to enhance student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unintended consequences</li> <li>Principal-agent problem</li> <li>Firing a teacher or put sanction often difficult</li> </ul>	
Grants	Strengthen financial resource of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See SBM</li> </ul>	(short-term less institutionalized) support and recognition
Teacher Management-contract teacher	Create incentives to perform through job insecurity & closer pay-performance link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job insecurity may work otherwise</li> <li>Sustainability and equity concerns</li> </ul>	
Teacher Management-performance bonus	Create incentives to perform through financial rewards & closer pay-performance link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitive to design (e.g. pay-for-percentile works better)</li> </ul>	

Source: Author’s summary of literature

Long-term and more institutionalized support such as training and career advancement are rarely looked into, which is nevertheless part and parcel of a more comprehensive understanding on educational accountability mentioned in Section 1.1. To better appreciate the importance of supportive accountability, it is worth pointing out that it serves quite different functions as compared with discipline- and control- types of accountability. The logic of the latter is more of a threshold or bottom-line safeguard to prevent the worse from the bad. Despite its indisputable necessity, for learning and improvement to take place, education system cannot just stop with safeguards; the logic of improvement, derived from the goal of education in the first place, is essential here as well.

Finally, given the fact that transparency is essential for accountability, the focus of studies so far have been more on the static provision of information about student outcomes to parents or societal actors who are expected to hold teachers and schools accountable in substitute of the government. While evidence in this regard is also mixed (e.g. Banerjee et.al 2010, c.f. Andhrabi et al. 2017), the manner in which information is communicated remains less scrutinized. However, specific studies on communication among particular stakeholders do suggest that information communicated in a consultative manner tends to have better reception than when it is communicated through a top-down manner the positive impact of this dynamic dimension (e.g. Mangla 2015).

## **Research Objectives**

In light of the literature gaps identified above, this paper aims to zoom into the supportive accountability mechanisms of teacher training, career advancement and communication between teacher and other stakeholders. It intends to explore the actual practice of these three mechanisms within the contexts of government middle schools in China and India.

The data on which the analysis is based comes from a larger project being undertaken by the author as part of her doctoral dissertation research.<sup>2</sup> Through survey and interviews of over 200 teachers, principals, education officials, experts and NGO workers, the purpose was to not only explore supportive accountability in the two systems, but also examine and analyse if and to what extent they affected teacher satisfaction and other educational outcomes. Presented in this paper are the preliminary results supplemented with reflective observations, which are deemed as sufficient to inform the research questions in this current paper.

Although public education systems in China and India are two of the biggest worldwide, relatively less is known about their governance. In terms of the broader

literature on China-India comparison, the focuses are either on economic or

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<sup>2</sup> The full dissertation (Yan 2019b) is available at <https://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/handle/10635/156058>. Accessed 08 February 2020.

geopolitical issues. The few comparisons on social-economic development similarly concern only grand national or state/provincial levels (e.g. Dreze and Sen 1995, Chapter 4; Hao and Yu 2015; Smith and Joshi 2016; Yan 2018). The less scrutinized sub-state levels (such as school-level practices) are nonetheless important as policy dynamics in these two countries are often such that *de jure* national and state-/provincial-level policies can be translated quite differently into *de facto* sub-state practices. Last but not least, to the extent that discrepancy between policy intention and implementation is also common to other developing countries (e.g. Thailand, see Patrinos et al. 2015), exploring the governance of government middle schools in these two countries may well generate much broader policy implications.

**Table 2. Governance Structure of Basic Education**

India				China	
Level	Administration	Academic	Program	Level	Agency
National	Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD	National Council of Education Research and Training	Education Division, Planning Commission	National	Department of Basic Edu I & II, MOE
Delhi	Directorate of Education	State Council of Education Research and Training	State Project Office	Beijing	Division of Basic Edu.& Beijing Institute of Education affiliated to it
Districts	Deputy Director of Education (DDE)	District Institute of Education and Training	District Project Office / DIC	Districts	Section of Basic Education
Zones	Zonal Officer			Cluster	Loosely coupled school groups ( <i>Jituan</i> ) or clusters ( <i>Jiqun</i> )
Cluster	Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator				
Schools	School Management Committee and Head of School			Schools	Principal

Given the largely exploratory nature of the research objective, Delhi and Beijing serve as appropriate starting points for the study. This is not only because they are two capital cities, but they are also more comparable in terms of administrative status and set-up (Table 2 above)<sup>3</sup> as well as other features. For instance, Beijing and Delhi are considered suitable in scrutinizing governance and accountability as both cities do have quite established training and promotion systems- the accountability mechanisms which this paper seeks to examine, even though the

<sup>3</sup> Other than that, rural areas in India has a parallel self-governance structure called Panchayat Raj alongside the administrative structure, in which Village Education Committees (VECs) under Village Panchayat is also responsible for basic education within the village. In no part of China's educational governance structure is similar to that, hence the comparison of rural areas will be more complicated so far as the administrative structure is concerned.



actual practice differs quite substantially, as will be seen in the next section. In contrast, securing and strengthening inputs may still be a more urgent concern insofar as their less advanced regions are concerned, although lessons on supporting teachers from Beijing and Delhi may still be inspirational.

## Research Design and Implementation

To fulfil the research objectives outlined in the last section, the paper seeks to scrutinize how in-service teacher training, career advancement and inter-stakeholder communication is practiced in government middle schools in Beijing and Delhi, especially from the perspective of teachers as the direct recipients of such support. Public junior middle schools of Beijing and the roughly equivalent government upper-primary schools in Delhi studied here cover the last stage of basic education in both countries.<sup>4</sup> While enrolment and drop-out rates have seen tremendous improvement in primary schools due to universalization efforts, outcomes from middle schools are generally less satisfying despite ongoing initiatives (e.g. SSA in India; see also Siddhu 2011 on India and Shi et al. 2015 on China). Figuring out what works at this level is thus also more urgent.

It would have been ideal if any criteria for random selection of participating schools were available across the two cities. But given the lack of such criteria and also the time and budget constraints for a doctoral dissertation, the selection of sample districts follows a purposive sampling approach by eliminating the incomparable districts of the two cities.<sup>5</sup> In the end, the two average districts of Fengtai (Beijing) and North Delhi (Delhi) were considered suitable to fulfil the exploratory purpose of this comparative study.

There were 33 government middle schools in North Delhi and 24 in Fengtai as per the lists on their official websites. In the former, 151 teachers (from 33 schools) were surveyed between September 2016 and May 2017.<sup>6</sup> In the latter, 80 teachers (from 22 schools) were surveyed between December 2016 and December 2017

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<sup>4</sup> In China, compulsory education stipulated by law is from Grades 1 to 9, for while Grades 5/6 to 9 is the junior middle school level. In India, 'free and compulsory' education specified by the Right to Education is for students from age six to fourteen, roughly Standards I to VIII, for which Standards VI to VIII is called the upper-primary level. In terms of the schooling forms, both the (junior middle or upper-primary) schools and composite (pure plus higher secondary) schools are quite common in Beijing and Delhi, and therefore included in the research. The schools studied are also jointly referred to as 'government middle schools.'

<sup>5</sup> Haidian District has the highest concentration of higher education institutions in Beijing, or even in China. Accordingly, the number of schools affiliated to those universities is also exceptionally high. These schools, apart from common resources received by other schools, also enjoy the support from the universities to which they are affiliated. Likewise, dilapidated infrastructure and ethnic tension in Northeast Delhi would also be unheard of in any district in Beijing.

<sup>6</sup> In each school, the following teachers were invited with at least one in each category whenever applicable: one TGT with 1-3 years of Delhi government school experience, one TGT with 4-10 years of experience, one TGT with 11+ years of experience, one PGT (if applicable), and one guest teacher. In Beijing, the last category is not applicable as all teachers are regular employees of the school.

(including pilot). All surveys and follow-up interviews were done on spot at the school, while interviews with university and think tank experts, government officials and NGO workers were conducted in places convenient to the interviewees. Participants were not compensated financially, but were given small tokens of appreciation upon completion of the work in each school.

### **In-service Training: Providers, Arrangements, Highlights and Deficits**

Both Delhi and Beijing have multiple levels of education administration from national authorities to the schools *per se*. However, as far as the in-service trainings are concerned (especially for teachers), the differences are quite stark. To begin with, while it is the lower levels, i.e. school, cluster and district, that provide the majority of the trainings in Beijing, in Delhi the training was overwhelmingly planned and conducted at the state level (by the SCERT). Few teachers do mention District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) as providers: the DIETs are indeed in charge of in-service training for teachers up to Class VIII on paper. In reality, though, interviews reveal that trainings are often planned and executed in close collaboration between the two,<sup>7</sup> and the autonomy of the DIETs is highly limited.

Concentration at the top is not necessarily bad if consultation is solicited from the teachers to be trained. However, that does not seem to be the case in Delhi. Training plans are largely conveyed through state circulars that reach schools directly, bypassing mid-level government apparatuses and ignoring the contextual variations of individual schools, not to mention the consultation with individual teachers.<sup>8</sup> It is not uncommon to find timings of circular issuance rather hasty, reflecting inadequate planning of the state government while granting little consideration about predictability and flexibility for the schools.<sup>9</sup>

In Beijing, the percentage of respondents consulted on their training needs and preferences beforehand is not high either, although the figure 30 per cent is substantially higher than that for Delhi (less than 15 per cent). The more important point here is that as the schools and districts are the major training providers in Beijing, the proximity between the providers and recipients is much closer. Compared with the providers at the state level whose training provision is much less frequent, there are more opportunities to solicit teachers' training needs and preferences as well as learning about their feedback in a timely manner.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview DL-20161007-GO03. There are also some overlaps in the training of TGTs. The only substantial difference between the two is that the SCERT also offers a part-time Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) course as pre-service training.

<sup>8</sup> Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs), for instance, are commented to have been reduced to mere data collection agencies which are originally supposed to 'provide academic resources and support for teachers.' Interview-DL- 20160926 - GO02. Interview – DL – 20161007 -GO03.

<sup>9</sup> To illustrate, circular NO.DE.23 (380)/ Sch.Br/2015/1002 notify an orientation program for assistant teachers and TGTs of Hindi and Math. The orientation program is scheduled on 31 July 2015, while the circular was sent on 29 July 2015, only two days before.

Second, regarding how training programs mentioned by the survey respondents are implemented, Beijing follows a more continuous approach. With schools and the district being the epicentre, trainings are run in a weekly manner throughout the academic calendar that are related to upgrading teachers on contents of textbooks, syllabus etc. Trainings on student and classroom management are also held in an ongoing manner once or twice a month. As training programs are planned throughout the semester, the length of individual trainings is usually between one to two hours. Rarely would any training exceed three hours.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, with few exceptions, the majority of the training in Delhi was provided as one-time, mostly during the summer break. The training usually lasted for five to ten days in a row, with six to eight hours of programmes per day. If a teacher missed those days for whatever reasons, the next chance to catch up would not appear until the next training circle, i.e. the next school break. Therefore, even amongst the regular teachers who had already worked in their schools for at least one year (so that the possibility of missing a training due to newcomer status is ruled out), there are still around 20 percent who have not received any training during the previous academic year. Other than personal reasons of absence, teachers revealed that either the training was cancelled or it did not happen at all for some subjects. Both the unavailability and the more general inflexibility (i.e. happening once or twice only at a particular time of the year) would impose severe constraints on the adequacy and efficacy of training to support/strengthen teaching skills and teacher professional development. In contrast, training coverage in Beijing is near-universal as gathered from the teacher survey.

In terms of the training contents, orientation on textbooks, syllabus and teaching skills is common to both cities. Other contents such as student and classroom management, parental involvement or action research are few and far between. Having said so, trainings are still more regular in Beijing thanks to the institutionalized training programs for “class teachers”, in which all class teachers surveyed have reported their participation, with 50 per cent of teacher respondents considering the current training arrangement as matching their expectations. In Delhi, however, only 4 percent of surveyed teachers indicated the

same. When training arrangements do not match the needs of those being trained, the latter may also be less likely to get satisfied despite the intention of in-service training in strengthening the skills and professionalism of teachers. Reflected in the teacher survey here, average satisfaction on training is rated 3.2 out of a scale of 5

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<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that concentrated trainings are non-existent. Yet according to the less than 10 per cent teacher respondents who did attend 8 hours of concentrated training per day during the last academic year, training was either held at the municipal level, for which they were selected to attend because of their positions as ‘academic group leaders’ (教研组长) during which the leading experts would familiarize them with new textbook contents. In another case, the concentrated training was an outbound program to a renowned school in a different city which, in addition to lectures, also included site visits and observations. In that case, while eight hours of training may seem long, it may not necessarily be monotonous if the quality is high and activities are rich.

for respondents in Delhi. In contrast, the figure for their counterparts in Beijing is 4.2 out of 5, one full point higher. Training contents not matching needs and expectations are cited as one of the common reasons of dissatisfaction by respondents in Delhi. In Beijing, the concern is less about appropriateness or quality of training. Yet even when teachers find the training to be of high quality, its usefulness would still be limited as they often find it difficult to fully translate what is learned from their training into real-world classroom practices.

### Career Development: Horizontal versus Vertical Career Paths

Recruitment as permanent government school teachers in Delhi takes place at the state level, based on nationally regulated degree requirements and qualification exams. There are three ranking levels within the school system: primary teachers (PRTs), trained graduate teachers (TGTs) and post graduate teachers (PGTs), amongst which the latter two are within the middle schools. Promotion, with very rare exceptions, means a vertical “upgrade” from teaching primary grades to upper-primary and lower secondary to higher secondary grades (see left side graphic in Figure 1, left), provided that the teacher being promoted also gets the required degree or pre-service training (usually a master’s degree so as to be promoted from PRT to TGT or TGT to PGT).

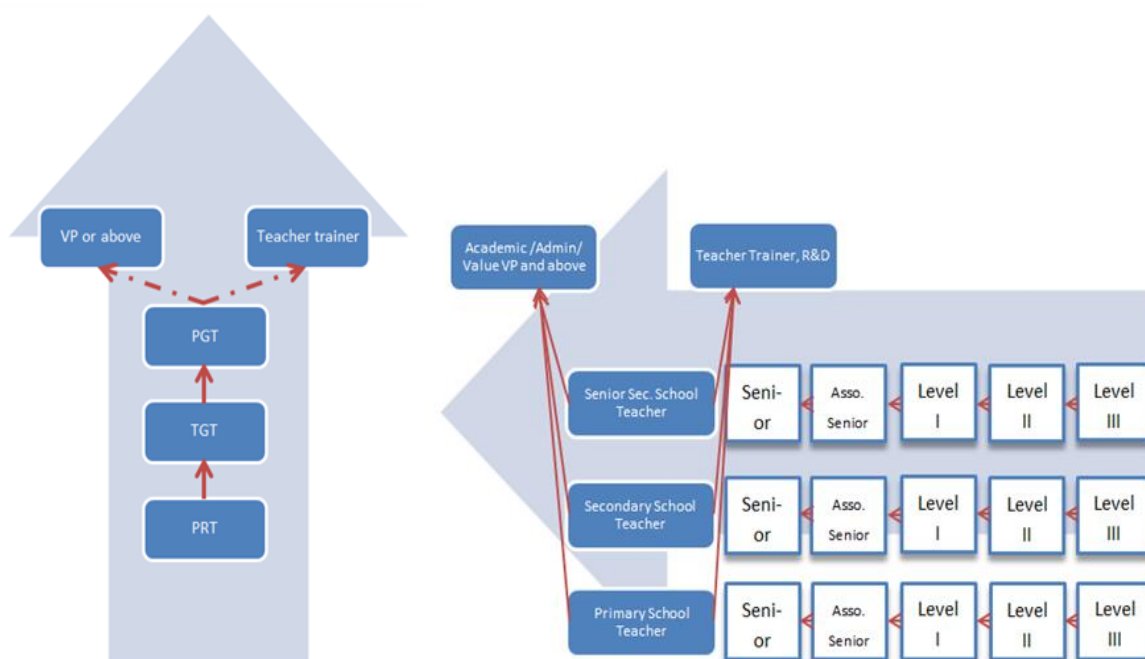


Figure 1 Career Path of Government School Teachers in Delhi and Beijing  
Source: Author

This arrangement fails to acknowledge basic education as an independent field of knowledge and expertise (Dyer 2005:149). As the promotion outcomes moves the teacher away from primary to secondary and from secondary to higher secondary

levels, it seems to imply a kind of “superiority” of secondary over basic education. Exacerbating such rigidity is the fixation with disciplines during promotion.<sup>11</sup> Taken together, a substantial amount of teacher expertise has been dissipated or disregarded which could have otherwise been harnessed as a valuable old asset. In addition, promotion can be a rather lengthy process without the right opportunities (such as fast-track post opening through exams). According to the teacher survey, for respondents in Delhi who have received promotion in their career so far, the interval between receiving the latest promotion and the filling of the questionnaire is on average 49 months for PGTs and 79 months for TGTs. Not surprisingly, as the average level of teacher satisfaction over the promotion system in Delhi is 3.4 out of 5 in the survey, 41.3 per cent of the respondents are dissatisfied because ‘it takes too long to get promoted,’ to be followed by 20 per cent of complaints that ‘promotion is based on other criteria than teaching professionalism and excellence’ as the second most-picked reason of dissatisfaction.

In contrast, career development in Beijing’s school system follows what can be named as the ‘horizontal path’ (Figure 1, right). Primary, middle and senior secondary schools are separate structures in the career development system. This helps retain expertise at each level in terms of both the contents of teaching as well as dealing with students of particular ages whose psychology are accordingly distinctive.

Different ranks within the path would also have implications on the contents of the trainings that teachers receive. Nearly all the newly joined teachers surveyed in Beijing, are enrolled in young professional programs. Apart from traditional lecturing, they are often guided in the programs by experienced teachers in both textbook contents and class delivery, which resembles a kind of apprenticeship. Trainings for the already experienced teachers, on the other hand, would be more advanced and covers materials such as the theories and philosophies behind the teaching contents. It is also these teachers that are more likely to be invited to exchanges and dialogues with expert teachers from other districts or even provinces.

Above all, the most experienced teachers would assume the role of ‘academic group leaders’ who coordinate teaching plans and training activities within the school (in the form of teaching study groups or ‘jiaoyanzu 教研组’). Not only is this

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<sup>11</sup> For example, there are cases where a Science TGT, with Bachelor of Science degree and teaching experience of 20 years in lower secondary Science, got promoted into English PGT given his Master of English degree. The reason is largely that it was more difficult to get promoted in the Science discipline than in the English discipline at that time. The promotion dictates that he teach higher secondary English rather than resuming in his field of expertise which is lower secondary Science. And while such expertise could have been shared by others were he made a teacher educator for other Science TGTs, in reality this new English PGT was made to attend in-service trainings for English PGTs- indiscriminately with other English PGTs who may already have years of experiences teaching higher secondary English! Similar cases were mentioned by five government school teachers and principals during the field work.

a separate designation for which extra salaries are given, but it also serves as an accelerator for further promotion as leaders at district or municipal level, or earn the title of ‘premium teachers’ that embellishes their career paths.<sup>12</sup> So far as the promotion interval is concerned, the figure for respondents who have received a promotion by the time of the survey is 33 months on average. Overall satisfaction of the promotion system is also higher for respondents in Beijing (3.9 out of a scale of 5). ‘Time to get promoted being too long’ is still the top reason of dissatisfaction for respondents in the Beijing survey, although the percentage of total respondents feeling that way is substantially (25 per cent) lower than the case of Delhi (over 40 per cent). Interestingly, the second most-cited reason of dissatisfaction in Beijing, felt by 15 per cent of the respondents, is about the promotion system being too competitive and therefore stressful. Having said so, as long as expertise and skills are respected and valued in the system, teachers may still be more likely to be incentivized to take professional development seriously.

### **Stakeholder Communication: Facilities and Modality**

As mentioned in Section 2, more than just communication of information, it is the modality of communication that may critically determine its effectiveness. Communication among teachers is even more important such as on the additional dimensions of peer learning and exchange. In the case of Delhi schools, the nature of institutional arrangements seems to suffocate a dynamic and interactive process of communication that ignores teacher specialization or teaching needs. For example, unlike schools in Beijing whose teacher offices are organised according to the subjects, the practice of subject-wise offices is rather unheard of in Delhi. Instead, nearly all the schools in the survey have only one large “staff room” with one long table, not to mention lack of facilities such as individual computers or personal spaces. In practice, they are often reduced to places where teachers take a break (subjected to noise made by other teachers) and have casual chats. Nor was it observed throughout the entire field work that any of the teachers (both the ones surveyed and their colleagues) had a laptop with them for their work. Interestingly, when asked how they typically conduct lesson planning, 13 per cent of teacher respondents in Delhi explicitly mentioned the use of internet resources as a particular category. In Beijing, it is more likely the case that utilization of computer and internet is already an internalized daily practice.

In terms of teachers’ communication with other stakeholders, it is observed that for all the schools surveyed in Delhi, there is only one landline per school that is located in the principal’s office. This landline is used by the principal, teachers and often even students, thus incurring higher transaction costs to each of the users. Teachers can of course cope by using their own cell-phones, which indeed seems to be the practice, although the latter would mean paying out of teachers’ own

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<sup>12</sup> The title of ‘premium teachers’ is largely honorary, as their professional cadre remains ‘senior’. However, those teachers may receive higher social recognition in practice. One principal with ‘premium teacher’ title revealed that an invited class delivered by her for private or non-governmental institutes may cost 3000 to 4000 yuan. Interview BJ-20161228-P04.

pockets. Having to check cell-phones during school hours - which could have been easily replaced by a landline, would affect teacher productivity.

The active adoption of 'wechat' groups, the Chinese equivalent of 'whatsapp', is another way to save transaction costs amongst multi-stakeholder communications. A typical teacher respondent in Beijing would have at least three categories of 'wechat' groups: those with other fellow teachers of the school, those with parents or students, and those with teachers from other schools who participate in the same district-level training. Each category can be further divided along different purposes: activity-related, academic-related, project related etc. It is thus possible to tailor the sharing and delivery of information through a more classified 'wechat'/ 'whatsapp' channel that would in turn increase the efficiency of communication (although teachers in Beijing do mention the concern of information overload on them as well as on parents during the follow-up interviews), apart from providing an interactive learning and information exchange experience for teachers on an ongoing basis.

In Delhi, an increasing number of (mostly private) schools have started to adopt a mass messaging system to facilitate communication with parents. However, in the government schools surveyed, the 'whatsapp' groups are organised in a less systematic fashion, usually confined to the school staff. Telephone calls, SMS and paper letters are still the dominant methods of communication with parents.

### **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

Supportive accountability mechanisms in the forms of in-service teacher training, career development and inter-stakeholder communication is relatively less studied as compared to disciplinary and control type of accountability such as school inspections and sanctions, in spite of the former's potential role in improving educational governance. This study is an original effort to see how such support is operationalized on the ground, with a specific focus on whether they match with the incentives of the front-line stakeholders in two of the world's largest basic education sectors.

A disclaimer is nonetheless in place: the purpose of comparing Beijing and Delhi here is by no means to judge inferiority or superiority of either of the systems. As explained, this paper is largely descriptive, in response to an exploratory question. To understand whether and to what extent these accountability mechanisms affect education outcomes as well as the explanatory factors behind them may require more rigorous quantitative analysis and more in-depth interviews at a later stage. This would provide grounds for robust and specific policy recommendations without jumping to the suggestions of sweeping policy borrowing from each other regardless of their diverse historical and political backgrounds and intricate local realities.

Notwithstanding this caveat, the strength of a comparative study like this still opens up rich avenues of mutual learning on best practices, to be adapted to the respective contexts.

In addition, the paper has highlighted several common problems still plaguing the two systems which are far from perfect in any one of the three accountability mechanisms studied. Above all, the comparison shed light on why and how government should still play a vital role in supporting teachers to build their capacity and strengthen their professionalism effectively. Indeed, it is necessary for governments to first understand local needs, incentive structures and capacity deficits before devising appropriate and relevant schemes to address them. Given that training on student and classroom management and action research are variously complained to be inadequate in both Beijing and Delhi, keeping updated on how each other is tackling the common challenges would hence also stimulate timely brainstorming or even policy learning. In that light, the exercise of this paper, apart from being a much-needed basis for future explanatory research, serves more as a mirror to help both better understand what works in education governance and accountability, and why.

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