# Innovating in Education: NGO Interventions in New Delhi Government Schools

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Innovating in Education: NGO Interventions in New Delhi Government Schools

A dissertation presented
by
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to
The Department of Sociology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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in the subject of
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Innovating in Education: NGO Interventions in New Delhi Government Schools

This dissertation examines three education non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in New Delhi that attempt to innovate within the Indian government school system. The author uses immersive ethnography to understand how school-level phenomena can enable or constrain student learning. First, the author argues that “tightly managed,” highly supervised teachers can engage and plan more with the schools in which they work, whereas “loosely managed,” unsupervised teachers act autonomously and engage less. Rigid curriculum causes teachers to teach faster than students can learn. Flexible curriculum allows teachers to adjust to student learning speeds. Second, the author finds that NGO and mainstream government teachers have distinct “cultures of learning.” Government teachers sort students into two categories: learners and non-learners, effectively blacklisting the latter and failing to cater to their needs. NGO teachers try to treat all students equally, despite high levels of within-classroom inequality in student learning levels. Importantly, the students themselves in both government and NGO classrooms usually tend to subscribe to the government culture of learning rather than the NGO one. Students themselves show evidence of having internalized their status as either capable or incapable of learning. There is no evidence to suggest that NGO teachers have been able to alter the approach that government teachers take to teaching and learning within government schools. Finally, the author points out that the NGOs studied are able to scale their programs up to more schools if they maintain strong administrative relations with government actors, secure independent funding, and establish their interventions at schools to merely a sustainable extent. It is not necessary for NGOs to gain any government teacher or student buy-in in order to scale up.
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Making a list of everyone, including names, who were critical in bringing this project to fruition would take almost as long as doing the project itself, because so many people from so many places were involved along the way. I met these remarkable champions of educational improvement all over India and the United States at universities, weekly dinner gatherings, in buses and trains, and of course in the schools and organizations that I studied. From trusted advisors to strangers I met on the Delhi metro who turned into friends, everyone played an important role. It definitely takes a village to do a PhD and I benefited from being part of a very supportive village.

You know who you are and your contributions are highly appreciated and will never be forgotten. As you know, this project was only a starting point to working in education for me and I look forward to staying in touch or reconnecting with you in the near future to share more ideas and do work together.

Important note about teachers

When you are in the environments in which my fieldwork took place, it is hard to enter with a game plan and execute it without making some very severe compromises. The teachers I studied had to go to the same class in the same school every single day, with the responsibility on their shoulders of executing an impossible task. The constraints are too many. Teaching 60 students by yourself when your co-teacher is out sick is an impossible task. Using a new teaching method when nobody around you believes it is the right thing to do or is even willing to entertain it is an impossible task. The teachers and organizations I studied tried their hardest under these impossible conditions. They approached their work with the best of intentions and to the best of their abilities. They come in with enthusiasm and desire to make a difference. We know that this is the case because so many of them eschew lucrative alternative career paths to become teachers for a few years, if not more. You wouldn’t do that if you didn’t care about the problem. But the structural characteristics of the system truly do work against them. It is classic sociology, a classic case of structure overcoming agency. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind while reading this dissertation that any accounts of problematic or unproductive behavior on the part of teachers should not be interpreted as personal deficiencies, laziness, lack of caring, or lack of strong will on their part. Rather, these behaviors are merely an inability to exercise a sufficient level of agency given the structural constraints of the specific educational environments.

The names of all teachers and other personnel who appear in this dissertation have been changed in order to protect their anonymity.

Also note that in general, Teach for India and Simple Education Foundation personnel spoke with me in English. Aspire teachers and students spoke with me in Hindi while Aspire managers and other staff typically spoke with me in English. I have made efforts to indicate the language used in the quotations provided in this dissertation.
Chapter 1.. Introduction

This dissertation examines attempted collaborations between education nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government schools that provide primary and secondary education to poor populations in New Delhi, India. More specifically, I conducted a case study of three NGOs that are conducting education interventions with government school children in order to understand how they go about making change and what the observable outcomes are of these efforts. In this introductory chapter, I present 1) a puzzle that motivated this dissertation project, 2) an outline of the dissertation including the research questions investigated in each chapter and a brief selection of the most important findings, 3) the operationalization of the motivating puzzle into an empirical research strategy and a summary of fieldwork activities, 4) a summary of the setting in which the research took place, and 5) background information about education in India. Much of this information is then expanded upon in Chapter 3, which includes more information about the Indian government school system, my empirical cases, and research methods.

The backdrop to this dissertation and to the Indian education system is a society that is plagued with issues of social inequality and poverty. For example, in 2014, the top 1% of earners in India received 22% of total income in the country while the bottom 50% of earners only received 14.9% (Chancel & Piketty 2017). Education, as an institution in which all children are meant to participate, has the capability to reduce this drastic inequality if it is delivered effectively. It is the job of the government school system to provide education to the children within the families in the bottom 50%. This dire level of inequality and the potential of a
well-functioning education system to combat it motivated me to investigate instruction and innovation at the school level. School-level behaviors of teachers influence learning outcomes of students. Positive learning outcomes can in turn give alumni of the education system better opportunities in the labor market, while negative outcomes can contribute to the perpetuation of inequality by keeping families poor.

When this link between pedagogy and practices at schools, educational outcomes of students, and social inequality is considered as a whole, this topic of study reveals itself to be one of clear sociological interest. Schools in India can either fight against inequality or contribute to the maintenance of the current structure of stratification. Furthermore, this is an area in which sociologists can have an impact by conducting research that can help improve conditions. Leaders both within the school system and in education NGOs could benefit from an increased understanding, provided by sociologists, of how school-level forces lead to particular outcomes. These actors could then disrupt the forces that are found to be detrimental and foster the forces that are found to be beneficial.

A puzzle in need of attention

Many NGOs are carrying out effective education work without partnering with any government entities. In many cases, the work conducted by education NGOs is effective enough that it could be replicated in other areas with potentially great social benefit. For example, there are NGOs in New Delhi which have established themselves within a single neighborhood, where
they operate one or multiple small learning centers. Local students (or even young adults) can come to these centers after school each day for a few hours for additional tutoring in their school materials, preparation for standardized tests, and acquiring basic work skills for future use in the labor market. With the help of these NGO programs, these students go on to experience smoother and more stable integration into the workforce once they finish school. The education imparted to students at neighborhood learning centers of this sort appears to be effective for many NGOs. These NGOs have a blueprint for their own educational programs which could be replicated in other neighborhoods or even integrated within the formal government school curriculum itself.

However, while many NGOs are established independently on a small scale, government schools in India are in a dire state and, though improving in certain categories, still leave much to be desired. For example, enrollment is an area that has improved over the last decade or so, in large part due to the passing of the Right to Education Act in 2009. According to government statistics, in the 2005-06 school year, the net enrollment ratio\(^1\) in classes (grades) 1-5 was 84% nationwide and 66% in Delhi alone (NUEPA 2007). In 2015-16, this ratio was 87% nationwide and 93% in Delhi (NUEPA 2016)\(^2\). School facilities and infrastructure have also improved. For example, in 2005-06, 37% of schools nationwide and 88% in Delhi had girls toilets; whereas in 2015-16, 98% nationwide and 100% in Delhi had these facilities (NUEPA-B 2016).

Nevertheless, educational quality is still lacking in government schools. For example, nationwide

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1 Net enrollment ratio is defined as “Enrolment in primary education (Grades I-V) of the official primary school age group (6 to 10+ years) expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population” (NUEPA 2016).
2 Of course, it is important to remember that not all students who are enrolled in school actually attend. Nevertheless, these statistics do help give an indication of the improvement over one decade. However, classroom behavior of teachers and learning outcomes of students are not showing any indication of reaching a high level, as much of this dissertation addresses.
reading and math scores, though improving, are still quite low. In rural areas in 2016, 52% of fifth standard (fifth grade) students were only able to read at the first standard level or lower, while only 26% of students could perform division (the remaining 74% could only perform subtraction or simpler tasks) (ASER Centre 2017). Finally, classroom observation in any Delhi government school will also likely demonstrate a lack of effort on the part of teachers as well as students who do not receive practice in reading, writing, and problem solving. Students instead are taught via rote learning methods that do not allow them to retain the material that they are encountering.

These facts about the state of education NGOs and the government school system in India lead to an empirical puzzle: The innovation of many education NGOs coupled with the scale of the government school system ought to make the two groups a match made in heaven. More formally stated, given 1) the existence of certain education NGOs which operate on a small scale and 2) the low quality of the government school system which exists on a large scale, an opportunity exists to cultivate public-private partnerships between the two sectors. In theory, each type of actor has assets that are useful to the other: NGOs running effective programs want to spread and scale their superior educational methods, while the government school system, which is lacking in quality, already has the physical infrastructure in place to conduct this scaling. The government school system faces insurmountable learning

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3 While only pertaining to rural areas, this data from ASER Centre is used due to its reliability as a third party evaluator of education in India. ASER Centre also sampled an (urban) ward of New Delhi in 2014 and found similar results: 63% of standard 3-5 students and 36% of standard 6-8 students could only read at the standard 1 level or lower, while the rest could read at the standard 2 level or higher. In arithmetic, 14% of standard 3-5 students and 32% of standard 6-8 students were able to perform division, while the remainder could only do subtraction or simpler skills (ASER Centre 2014).
deficiencies and could use the creativity and efficiency that NGOs can bring to government classrooms.

In practice, such partnerships rarely form and the situation on the ground in schools and communities is highly constrained. NGO leaders, education experts, and even government officials in India all routinely point out that the schooling of a child who attends an Indian government school is a complex system involving teachers, school administrators, parents, students themselves, and sometimes NGOs. They lament (accurately) that the teachers do not use effective strategies, demonstrate observable motivation to improve learning outcomes, or have incentives to even attend school in the first place. Furthermore, parents are unfamiliar with effective instructional practices, have no time to look into the situation, and nobody at school would necessarily listen to them if they did. Government schools are not allowed to hold students back from graduating to the next grade according to the Right to Education Act, so students with drastically different proficiency levels are routinely together in the same classroom. Many families with even a little bit of money send their children to some type of private school that takes a fee. Education NGOs sometimes have programs in place to help their students experience

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4 Parents’ unfamiliarity with learning practices that would be most effective for their children is understandable, given that they themselves are unlikely to have attended school for many years, if at all, during their own childhoods. Many of the children in government schools in India are first generation learners and do not benefit from a home environment that encourages them to excel in their studies. This family-level constraint is not only caused by parents’ lack of exposure to the school system but also by the constraints of living in low-resource conditions that force families to prioritize daily food, income, and health over attention to education, which will only deliver any returns to the family, if at all, many years into the future.
upward mobility after leaving school, whereas government schools offer no such plan of which most of their students can realistically take advantage.\(^5\)

**This is a case of change agents: what they want to do, which strategies they use, and what happens when they go into government schools.** If I were a district-level bureaucrat in the government school system, all else equal, I would be extremely eager to cultivate relationships with NGOs that could roll out programs in my schools. If I ran a successful NGO, I would be pestering government officials to let me into their schools. But this could not be farther from the current situation. **In other words, private-public partnerships seem well-suited for this situation, but education PPPs are still not very common.** There is also no formal system for PPPs to emerge and be structured, as in the example of the charter school system in the United States. The few partnerships that do exist between NGOs and government schools, some of which are studied in-depth in this dissertation, are the result of efforts on the part of NGO leaders to request meetings with government school officials and convince them of the value of NGO interventions in government schools.

In this dissertation, I examine specific empirical aspects of this broader puzzle by studying three NGOs -- Teach for India, Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation -- that all have the goal of innovating within government schools.

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\(^5\) The issue of integrating young adults into the workforce is, however, part of India’s national development agenda. An example of this is the Skill India campaign initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
In this dissertation, I take the puzzle presented above as a starting point. I then identify more specific research questions, summarized below, to address this puzzle through empirical fieldwork. To answer these questions, I studied three organizations of varying sizes and at various stages in partnership with the government in New Delhi, also summarized below. Note that these organizations are also described in more detail in Chapter 3.

The three organizations studied in this dissertation are Teach for India, Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation, each conducting educational interventions in Delhi with government school students on varying scales:

**Teach for India** (TFI) is a large, ten-year-old organization with a presence in hundreds of classrooms across India. Following the model of Teach for America, TFI trains selected applicants over summer vacation and places them into low-resource (mostly government, but some private) schools, sometimes with a TFI co-teacher, to serve as the primary classroom teacher(s) of usually 40-80 students for two years. These teachers use the very same curriculum that regular government school teachers must use. TFI now operates in nearly 10 cities and has been adding approximately one city to its operations per year for the last ten years. In Delhi, TFI had 9751 students in 234 classrooms with 287 teachers during the 2015-16 school year (Teach for India 2016). It also has a large administrative staff at a central office in Delhi, though TFI teachers rarely need to go there.
Aspire is a mid-size, three-year-old organization operating in 18 government schools in Delhi at the time of fieldwork and was poised to expand into approximately 1,000 government schools in Odisha. In Delhi, Aspire places 2-4 teachers in each of its partner government schools. These teachers provide remedial education for the subset of students at each school who are most in need. Students spend the majority of their day with their regular government classroom teachers and come to separate Aspire classrooms for one to two hours at a time for lessons in Hindi and math, designed to help them catch up to their grade level. Aspire teachers use Aspire’s own curriculum that has been tested and is frequently revised to deliver remedial material effectively. Aspire also has an administrative staff in a central office where Aspire teachers are required to report at the end of the school day for ongoing training, planning, and review.

Simple Education Foundation (SEF) is a small, two-year-old organization operating in one learning center in Delhi with one teacher. Unlike TFI and Aspire, SEF does not have a formal partnership with the government in Delhi but does intend to partner in the future. SEF uses a frequently evolving, alternative curriculum that causes its students to learn skills such as teamwork, basic computing, research, public speaking, and problem solving in addition to reinforcing more mainstream school skills such as reading, math, and science. SEF students attend a regular government school during the school day and then come to the SEF learning center in the afternoon. SEF intends to continue to hone its pedagogy until it is ready to enter government schools formally. However, during the course of my fieldwork, SEF was approached (unlike TFI and Aspire) by the government of Kashmir to launch a teacher training program. This program was in final stages of planning at the end of fieldwork.
After presenting a literature review in Chapter 2 and some more background and research methods in Chapter 3, in Chapters 4-6 of this dissertation, I examine three aspects of these organizations’ operations to understand their interventions and the dynamics of their work in the context of the government education system:

Chapter 4 examines the organizational structures and policies of the three NGOs and how these structural constraints or characteristics lead to specific school-level outcomes. This chapter investigates the following questions: 1) NGOs train teachers according to their own unique policies and to teach in a certain way, but what happens in reality when these teachers go into the school environment? 2) How do the NGOs’ organizational structures affect teachers’ actions and capabilities in school? 3) How does neo-institutional theory help interpret these findings?

Chapter 4 finds that 1) A rigid adherence to government curriculum (as with TFI) causes the “syllabus problem” that teachers have to rush to deliver the required curriculum all within a single semester, causing them to leave behind many of the students who need more time to learn a concept. A more flexible model (like Aspire’s or SEF’s) allows teachers to slow down and teach material that is more appropriate for each student’s learning level. 2) Organizational support of teachers, such as providing solutions manuals or additional training as needed, impacts teachers’ ability to be fully knowledgeable about the subject matter in the curriculum. 3) Tightly-managed teachers (as in Aspire) are well-integrated into the NGO at which they work while loosely-managed teachers (as in TFI) leave immediately at the end of the school day and
are siloed (separated) from the rest of their organization and fellow teachers. Loosely managed structures of teachers also resulted in untrained volunteers teaching in some classrooms rather than trained, full-time NGO teachers.

**Chapter 5** treats the NGOs as one group and government schools as another to examine the distinct culture of learning of each one and the consequences of trying to maintain those cultures while in the same school environment. This chapter investigates the following questions: 1) NGOs and government schools have distinct cultures of learning, so what happens when these two systems of belief about school and education come up against each other? 2) How do NGO practices impact the behaviors of government teachers and vice-versa, if at all?

**Chapter 5 finds** that 1) Government teachers, on one hand, believe that some students are not capable of learning, instill this belief in all of their students, and give more attention to those who they believe are capable of learning. NGO teachers, on the other hand, give equal attention to all students. 2) Government teachers start class late while many NGO teachers are more efficient when possible. 3) Government teachers create an atmosphere of discipline in the classroom, with the primary goal of having students write down content into their notebooks rather than gain a full understanding of the material. NGO teachers' classrooms are more organic and the teachers do make an effort to teach effectively. 4) Some NGO teachers adopt certain government teacher behaviors such as arriving late, being absent, not checking student answers or following up with students, and deviating from the stated schedule. Government teachers were never observed to adopt any of the behaviors of NGO teachers.
Chapter 6 looks outside of the NGOs into their environment to understand how their interventions vary from school to school and how they scale up to reach more schools and students. This chapter investigates the following questions: 1) Looking at the broader environment in which these NGOs exist, which factors affect the NGOs’ abilities to scale up their operations to more schools? 2) What framework can NGOs to use to decide how and when to scale up operations effectively, with special attention to being sufficiently “scaled down” first? 3) How do these conclusions relate to the state-society synergy framework?

Chapter 6 finds that the following are key growth-enabling factors that allow NGOs to scale their educational interventions to more settings and schools:

A. **Complementarity at the administrative level only:** If an NGO’s work or intervention is mutually beneficial to both NGO administrators and government officials, this complementarity can foster growth in the intervention. This happens regardless of whether NGO and government program managers and headmasters at the managerial level or NGO and government teachers at the school level find the intervention to be mutually beneficial. Projects that are “quick wins,” in the words of one interviewee, meaning that they can quickly show promising results, are particularly complementary and growth-enabling.

B. **Embeddedness at the administrative level only:** If ties and interaction between NGO administrators and government officials are regularly maintained, this embeddedness can
foster growth in the intervention. This happens regardless of whether NGO and government program managers at the managerial level or NGO and government teachers at the school level are socially embedded with one another.

C. **Being just sustainably (but not necessarily completely) scaled down:** For the NGOs studied in this dissertation to scale to more schools, it is not necessary for them to be so successful, capable, and deeply entrenched -- at existing locations in which they operate -- that teachers and students have bought into their program. Rather, they merely need to be established enough in each existing location in which they operate such that their intervention is running stably and appears to be able to continue to run. To use the terminology of Coburn (2003), interventions merely need to achieve a modest level of sustainability rather than a great depth of intervention at each school in order for the interventions to be scaled up to more schools.

D. **Having independent funding:** NGOs which grew in size during the course of my fieldwork each have independent sources of funding. They are not receiving any funding from the government. As interviewees explained, government actors were happy to renew and scale up programs for which the government did not have to pay. While I did not focus on funding as part of my fieldwork, my evidence suggests that this may be a key growth factor nonetheless.

E. **Having high fidelity across schools:** NGOs whose interventions are structured very similarly in the various schools across which they work are in the best position to scale up. If one NGO’s intervention looks different across the schools in which it works, the program is less scalable.
F. **Having low human capital needs**: NGOs that can a) easily train and place their own teachers into schools, and b) have those teachers implement the intervention easily without much involvement of government school personnel or much supervision, appear to scale up more easily. NGOs that a) require more resources to train teachers, b) supervise them once they are implementing the NGO program in a government school, and c) require heavier involvement of government personnel, appear to be hindered from scaling up as easily.

Based on these factors that were observed to impact scalability as well as evidence presented throughout this chapter, the most important conclusions of this chapter are as follows:

1. “Scaling up” (reaching more schools) and “scaling down” (penetrating within any one school) are not closely related phenomena. Being fully scaled down or achieving buy-in from government teachers and students (those being intervened upon) is not necessary for an intervention to scale to more schools.
2. NGOs can scale up regardless of the quality of their interventions, meaning that the aforementioned growth-enabling factors have to do with political situations, bureaucratic preferences, and organizational structure more than with learning outcomes for students.
3. Concepts like complementarity and embeddedness that determine potential for partnerships need to be examined at *multiple* organizational levels: administrative, managerial, and school. Relations at the the higher, “administrative” level are found to have the most impact on scalability, as mentioned above and as evidence presented in the
Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude this dissertation by situating my findings within the bigger picture of the education system in India, also taking the liberty to incorporate other observations about the school system that were not part of the preceding chapters. I also address the question of whose interests are being served by the NGO interventions studied in this dissertation.
Summary of fieldwork activities

After spending time as a volunteer at a government school in Gujarat to learn about the
government school system and visiting and interviewing members of approximately 50
education NGOs in Delhi, I began to study three of these organizations -- Teach For India,
Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation -- in great depth. Most of my fieldwork occurred
within schools or learning centers operated by these organizations with additional interviews
scheduled outside. The majority of my fieldwork was spent going to schools every day to
understand and participate in the relationships between NGO teachers, government teachers, and
students. This included observation of and information gathering regarding day-to-day
operations, relations and interactions between the various actors involved, organizational and
leadership structure, history of the projects, and role of government personnel in NGO
operations. To study these processes, I used in-depth interviews, participant observation,
ethnography, and review of written NGO and government materials. I also conducted research
outside of schools to interview staff members of NGOs and socialize with them informally to
learn more about their work and approaches to their jobs as educators. This research was
conducted in India from May 2014 until January 2016, with a total of 17 months spent in the
country during that span. Much more information about the research conducted for this
dissertation is in Chapter 3.
Education in India

Box 1.1 - Selected background statistics on education in Delhi and India, 2015-16

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<th></th>
<th>Nationwide</th>
<th>Delhi</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td># students, grades 1-5</td>
<td>129 million</td>
<td>1.9 million</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># students, grades 6-8</td>
<td>68 million</td>
<td>1.1 million</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># students, grades 1-12</td>
<td>260 million</td>
<td>4.2 million</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% private schools, gr 1-8</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>NUEPA-B 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% government schools, gr 1-8</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>NUEPA-B 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># primary schools</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
<td>5,751</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student to classroom ratio*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% schools with electricity*</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>NUEPA 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls to boys ratio, gr 1-5</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>NUEPA-C 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls to boys ratio, gr 6-8</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>NUEPA-C 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Primary and upper-primary schools only, meaning grades 1-8.

This section provides a selective overview of India’s massive primary and secondary education system (grades 1-12), with particular attention to primary schooling (grades 1-8). Specific attention is also given to describing the government education system in Delhi, where all of the empirical data for this dissertation was gathered. Within primary schooling, grades 1-5 are often referred to as ‘primary’ and grades 6-8 are referred to as ‘upper primary.’ Secondary grade levels are divided into secondary (grades 9 and 10) and upper secondary (grades 11 and 12). It is important to note that this classification is not used uniformly throughout the country. For example, some schools in which I conducted fieldwork were called secondary schools and served standards (grades) 6-12, even though grades 6-8 are technically referred to as “upper primary” in much of the national government’s literature on education.
Based on the 2011 national census, the female literacy rate in India was 65% (increased from 54% in 2001) and the male literacy rate was 82% (increased from 75% in 2001) (MHRD 2013). Based on a sample from 589 rural districts only, ASER Centre (2017), which produces a well-reputed yearly report, finds that in 2016, 65.4% of students age 6-14 attend government schools, 30.5% attend private schools, and 3.1% are not in school. ASER Centre finds that in 2016, 33.5% of rural fifth graders read below the first grade level (can only read individual words or less), 18.6% read at the first grade level, and 47.8% read at or above the second grade level. Delhi consists of urban districts and is therefore not included in the ASER Centre data.

In Delhi specifically, the curriculum and training for government schools are overseen by Delhi's State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT). Every state in India has its own SCERT. Delhi's SCERT as well as Delhi's Directorate of Education collaborate with a number of smaller organizations such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) which operate individual government schools within designated districts of the city. The organization known as the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), which is also located in Delhi, makes recommendations of best educational practices to the whole country for primary and secondary education. NCERT also produces a full set of curriculum each year in every single school subject for every grade level. Each state's SCERT can then choose which of these practices or materials to adopt. Delhi’s SCERT follows most NCERT recommendations, meaning that the curriculum taught in Delhi government schools is directly from the NCERT. For example, at the start of each school year,
students receive⁶ the exact NCERT textbooks corresponding to their grade level rather than any Delhi-specific materials.

Within government schools in Delhi, each class (grade level) is divided into classrooms. The class sizes I encountered in my fieldwork typically ranged from 50 to 80 students. NUEPA (2016) statistics state that the average student to classroom ratio in Delhi is 27. One SCERT official, in an interview⁷, told me that many classrooms in Delhi consist of just a teacher with few or even no students, because schools had to be created in every neighborhood due to the Right to Education Act, even if there were not many students in that area. She contended that there was an imbalance across the city, with some classrooms packed with 80 students with just one teacher while other classrooms were empty. This phenomenon may account for the average of 38, which is lower than what I observed at any point. Of course, NGO interventions are less useful in schools that are under-enrolled, so I was less likely to encounter such schools in my fieldwork.

At most Delhi government schools, the majority of classrooms are designated as “Hindi medium” classrooms, meaning that the language of instruction is Hindi. The textbooks for each subject are also written in Hindi in this case. Some of the classrooms, however, are “English medium” classrooms, meaning that the textbooks are written in English and the teacher and

⁶ A noteworthy feature of the government school system is that the government provides newly printed textbooks to every single government student at the start of every year. At the end of the school year, students do not need to return the books. They can keep or discard them as they please. In the cases I was able to witness in Gujarat and Delhi, the books were sent to each school in trucks where teachers would then distribute them to students. This is noteworthy because it shows that the school system, despite its many flaws, has the capability to distribute materials throughout its entire constituent parts. It shows that many of the logistical and infrastructural prerequisites to effective classroom instruction are already in place.

⁷ In September 2014.
students are meant to interact with each other in English throughout the school day. However, the vast majority of English medium instructors do not speak fluent English themselves and in practice teach their lessons to and interact with the students in Hindi. This is one of many examples presented throughout the dissertation of how the written policies and procedures are not actually implementable at the school level.

India's most recent major education reform was the 2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, also known as the Right to Education Act (or RTE). RTE provides for, among many other provisions, the “Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school” for children of ages 6-14, admission of students to school at an age-appropriate grade level (meaning a 13-year-old reading at the first grade level will still get placed in the 7th grade), the “rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school,” and the “appointment of appropriately trained teachers.” RTE also “prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition” (MHRD 2014). It is important to note that a free place in a secondary school (beyond 8th grade) is not guaranteed.
Chapter 2.. Literature review on NGO-government relations

This chapter is a review of literature that informs the study of education partnerships between NGOs and the government school system in India. Since literature specifically on education partnerships is small, I have reviewed public-private relationships from a number of fields and settings in order to gain a fuller understanding of research on state-society (or public-private) relations. This broad review of the field allows for a thorough investigation of the research questions delineated in Chapter 1. More specifically, this chapter consists of basic information and frameworks from the literature on PPPs, sociological traditions and theories that help frame the study of PPPs, literature on the institutional and policy environments in which PPPs exist, research on micro-level dynamics of PPPs, and gaps in the literature addressed in this dissertation. Within each of these sections are descriptions of how the literature reviewed relates to its corresponding empirical portion of the dissertation.

Introduction to the field and basic frameworks

This section introduces the field of the study of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), specifies terms and definitions related to PPPs that are used in the literature, presents one useful typology of collaborations between private and state actors, and reviews research on why PPPs form. The content reviewed in this section is useful to the empirical mission of this dissertation because all three of the educational interventions studied as cases -- Teach for India, Aspire, and
Simple Education Foundation -- can be situated within the frameworks provided by the literature and understood better as a result. The literature on why partnerships form is specifically relevant to Chapter 6, which investigates the processes by which the educational interventions studied “scale up” by entering increasing numbers of schools, having to convince government officials that the potential benefits of each partnership and its expansion outweigh the risks.

Collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental actors for the purposes of education and many other forms of development is increasing (Najam 2000, Bovaird 2004) and there are many success stories, in absolute terms, from across the world. It is important to better examine these collaborations as well as less successful attempts at collaboration to understand how to initiate education collaborations and cause them to have positive and sustainable outcomes. Non-governmental entities often conduct work that is parallel to work performed by the government (Clark 1995, Pfeiffer 2003), which is another reason to encourage partnership.

Sen (1999) points out that “most donors and some governments now agree that development would benefit from increased collaboration between the state and NGOs.” The literature cited below comes from a wide variety of academic disciplines that have given attention to state-society collaboration.8

Work within the sociology of organizations and state-civil society relations does an adequate job of laying down theoretical groundwork and understanding the macroscopic processes related to partnerships. Much less formal sociology considers microscopic,

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8 Note that I do not review literature on the history of public-private relations (see Evans 1995, Watkins et al 2012, Habib 2003, Bovaird 2004), transnational partnerships (see Schaferhoff et al 2009), or how NGOs impact policy (see Kim 2009, Kingdon 2007, Jagannathan 2001). These topics, while important to the study of NGOs and PPPs, are outside the empirical purview of this dissertation.
community-level processes and empirical cases of individual state-society collaborative projects. The bulk of the work on the microscopic aspects of collaborations comes from outside of formal sociology.

*Terms and definitions*

Government-NGO partnerships are also known by a number of other terms including public-private partnerships (PPPs), state-society synergy, state - civil society collaboration, and cross-sector social partnerships (CSSPs). Bovaird (2004) offers a simple definition that is sufficient and complete for the purposes of this dissertation: “working arrangements based on a mutual commitment (over and above that implied in any contract) between a public sector organization with any organization outside of the public sector.” By the time my fieldwork concluded, all of the NGOs I studied were either already part of partnerships that fit this definition, as was the case with Teach for India (TFI) and Aspire, or planned to form a partnership with the government school system after further developing their own intervention methods, as was the case for Simple Education Foundation (SEF).

In the literature, the government organization may be referred to in many ways such as public sector organization, government agency, local government, the state, public actor, public body, etc. The organization outside of the public sector could be a nongovernmental organization (NGO), nonprofit organization, any for-profit organization wishing to do development work, private organization, civil-society organization (CSO), private citizen, community-based organization (CBO), church, foundation, etc. Development refers to any work that provides basic human rights and needs including education, health, food/nutrition, sanitation, basic
infrastructure, gender equality, etc for those lacking access to them. The programs and projects of
most interest include direct impact at the community level (such as opening health clinics,
providing extra schoolteachers, building infrastructure, etc) rather than having only intangible
components (such as new policy) because these are the examples that are most informative to the
study of government-NGO collaboration within India's education system.

Typology of state-society relationships

For the sake of defining the partnerships of interest more clearly and examining the
variety in forms that they can take, this section reviews a typology of public-private relations.
Many scholars have created such typologies, most overlapping extremely. The best one for my
purposes is by Jennifer Coston (1998). She makes an eight-category typology of
NGO-government relations of which five categories – contracting, third-party government,
cooperation, complementarity, and collaboration involve government bodies and NGOs working
together or coexisting peacefully in some capacity. These five conditions are ones in which the
government accepts institutional pluralism. The other three categories – competition, repression,
and rivalry – involve antagonism and lack of positive relations. In these three cases, the
government does not accept institutional pluralism. Here is a brief summary of Coston's types:

1. *Repression:* Extreme rivalry. Government policies outlaw NGOs or certain activities.

2. *Rivalry:* Policies and required procedures “inhibit efficient NGO operations.”

   Government bodies have strong power over the operations and governance of NGOs.
3. **Competition**: Government actors (at any level) feel threatened by NGO. NGO may actively be lobbying for changes in government behavior. NGO and government representatives do not work together well in the field.

4. **Contracting**: NGO is used to deliver social service(s) that the government is supposed to provide. Government makes decisions and NGO executes.

5. **Third-party government**: Similar to contracting but NGO has some governance capability too and is less influenced by government.

6. **Cooperation**: NGO and government may engage in information sharing, resource sharing, and joint action.

7. **Complementarity**: NGO and government each work to their comparative advantage, providing services that the other cannot in coordination with one another. A mutually beneficial relationship.

8. **Collaboration**: Government shares responsibility and operations with a variety of private actors. NGO maintains its autonomy and underlying value system.

See Coston's article for more detail, examples of each type, and analysis of the implications of each relationship type for the health of NGOs. A number of other authors create typologies for public-private relations (see Mazouz et al 2008, Borzel & Risse 2005, Selsky & Parker 2005, Najam 2000).
Why partner? Reasons for collaborating.

This section addresses the question of why governments and private entities form partnerships (for a review of reasons against forming PPPs, see Patrinos et al 2009, p. 4). The most prominent reasons in the literature are a lack of public funding, greater efficiency that partnerships can offer, and the risk transfer or risk sharing inherent in partnerships. In some cases, public funds are not sufficient to do a project so public agencies may turn to the private sector as a way of bringing in more funds (Codecasa & Ponzini 2011, Bovaird 2004, Grimsey & Lewis 2002). This can reduce public financial burden in two ways: First, it can make the process of providing a service more efficient because privatizing can provide the service for less money, create competition that will lower the cost, or bring in people with special expertise (Patrinos et al 2009, Hammerschmid & Angerer 2005, Bovaird 2004, Moorman 2001, Atack 1999). Second, the private organization(s) can bring in money of their own (Codecasa & Ponzini 2011, Bovaird 2004). As a counter-point, Kuriyan and Ray (2009) point out that while partnering with the private sector could be more efficient, critics of PPPs have said that privatizing caters to a neoliberal market-led development agenda which limits the extent to which the public sector can properly serve the general population.

Forming a PPP can transfer financial risk from the public sector to the private sector (Patrinos et al 2009, Grimsey & Lewis 2002). One way this operates is of course that the private partner will invest various types of capital into the partnership and if it fails, they stand to lose these investments (whereas in the analog situation where the state provides the service on its own, the state would stand to lose all of the invested resources if the project failed). A second way is that the partnership contract between the public and private parties could stipulate a
sanction or penalty of some kind that the private entity would pay in the case of failure. Nisar (2006) reports that this system has worked well in the case of construction contracts. This concept of risk is less applicable in the educational context since outcomes and loss are not measured in financial terms (they are measured in terms of attendance rates, learning outcomes, etc).

While the PPPs under consideration in this dissertation certainly do feature some of the characteristics described above, they are also different in a number of ways. For example, the funding for TFI and Aspire’s programs mostly comes from third party donors, rather than from the government, as it would in a typical partnership. As discussed in Chapter 6, the government officials who engage in partnerships with education NGOs are actually taking a gamble with their reputation that could help their careers if the partnership goes well and hurt them if the partnership fails. But there is no investment from the government’s side of tangible resources such as money, personnel, or equipment. From the government’s perspective, the NGO gets the benefit of spreading its program to more classrooms while the government bears the risk of the project failing. Of course, when the funding is coming from an external source, it is easier for the government to say yes, since money and other resources are being added to the system as a result of the partnership. These dynamics of partnership maintenance and growth are investigated in Chapter 6.
Sociological traditions and frameworks

This section considers three main frameworks through which the field of state-society partnerships can be examined and rooted in basic sociological theory: neo-institutional theory; principal-agent theory; and state complementarity, embeddedness, and autonomy. Neo-institutional theory is used in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, where differences between the three cases are examined to understand the isomorphic pressures that do and do not currently exist, while also theorizing about pressures that are likely to emerge in the future as the organizational field of education NGOs in India continues to grow and establish stronger norms than the status quo. Principal-agent theory applies to the subject matter of Chapter 5 of this dissertation, where the principal-agent framework can be applied to both the government school system and the organizational structure within education NGOs to better understand their parallel structures and the opportunities for principals to monitor the agents within the school system. Principal-agent theory is discussed in an appendix to this dissertation rather than in Chapter 5, but is included in this section since multiple scholars consider it to be a key sociological theory that applies to PPPs. Finally, the “state-society” theories on state complementarity, embeddedness, and autonomy are unpacked and examined at different organizational levels in Chapter 6 to better understand the relationships between government and NGO actors as they pertain to the process of NGO intervention growth (“scaling up”) and NGO intervention depth (“scaling down”) within the school system and the individual schools where the interventions take place, respectively.
Neo-institutional theory

Neo-institutional theory is a useful lens through which to understand state-society collaboration (Matos-Castano et al 2014, Ramanath 2008, Hammerschmid & Angerer 2005). It hypothesizes that isomorphism will occur in established fields because organizations will try to follow certain norms that are considered to be most legitimate, causing organizations to be more similar but not necessarily more efficient (DiMaggio & Powell 1983, Meyer & Rowan 1977). There is evidence for such isomorphic pressures within the field of state-society collaboration. One example is the consensus in the literature that certain criteria are ideal to meet when forming a partnership, such as having good leadership, risk management strategies, funding, etc. There is consensus among scholars that these criteria ought to be met. Another example is the consensus that certain types of policy and institutional environments at the national level are best for partnerships, such as having policies that encourage government bodies to partner with private organizations and a pro-development political regime. Entities starting a partnership after reading the literature and studying previous successful partnerships would try to meet the criteria above and want to lobby for a favorable political and institutional environment. This is clear evidence of isomorphic pressure to conform to the legitimate ways of forming partnerships.

But at the same time, what the leadership team decides, which risk management strategy is used, and how funding is allocated varies immensely across cases. It is openly acknowledged in the literature that there is staggering diversity in the forms and types that these partnerships end up taking, making them incredibly hard to study. Many factors cannot be controlled such as the severity of the problem being solved, trustworthiness of all parties involved, and desires of government employees and local community members. Empirical examples are scarce.
Ramanath (2008) explains that neo-institutional theory predicts that as more NGOs partner with the state, this isomorphic pressure will lead to a loss of their creativity and versatility. She studies three Mumbai NGOs and finds that even though they shared the same public policy environment, they used different strategies in forming relationships with the government because they all had different ways of operating that they were already used to and had different local resource environments. Jooste et al (2011) review formation of PPPs in Canada, Australia, and South Africa and find that even though each region studied had similar characteristics, PPP fields developed quite differently in each area due to what they call a 'central field actor' or 'institutional entrepreneur' in Canada and Australia that pushed PPP development in a unique direction. The South African region studied had multiple streams of PPP development that eventually merged. The main point is that PPP development in each of the three countries was different despite isomorphic pressures regarding how the process should be done.

The bottom line is that neo-institutional theory does provide a decent framework to analyze formation of state-society ties because the diversity in local environments and politics means that much less isomorphism than predicted is seen so far. The paradox mentioned above applies to the education context quite well and is explored further in Chapter 4: on one hand, most education programs are structured similarly to each other, with an oversight body and teachers in classrooms working with students. On the other hand, education PPPs have huge variety in what exactly they provide, where they interact with students, to what extent they involve local community and infrastructure, whether they bring in teachers of their own, the extent to which government teachers are involved, etc. Some recommendations for newly formed partnerships can be made based on neo-institutional theory: Look at the forms of existing
partnerships and consider which ones might be useful, but do not feel obligated to adopt them. Maintain an understanding of what is needed in the specific situation and cater to that. Be aware that adopting legitimized characteristics may make the new program more appealing to funders, voters, and other interested parties.

**Principal-agent theory**

Principal-agent theory puts forth the simple hypothesis that in a firm there are owners and shareholders who stand to gain or lose based on the performance of the firm. There are controllers, managers, and employees who do most of the work and decisionmaking at the firm and therefore have control over whether profits are realized. The owners are called 'principals' and the controllers are called 'agents.' The principals bear all of the risk in the firm's activities. The agents may make decisions that are in their own personal interests rather than in those of their principals, so the principals must sustain costs (such as monitoring, creating incentives, etc) to make sure that the agents behave properly (Eisenhardt 1989, Fama & Jensen 1983, Jensen & Meckling 1976). This framework translates well to help understand state-society partnerships (Entwistle 2005, Bovaird 2004, Klijn & Teisman 2003). In this case, the agents are individuals in the partnering agencies or organizations who carry out the work. The principal is harder to define. Principals are those who stand to gain or lose from the performance of the agents. In the case of a task that has been outsourced or contracted from a public agency to a private organization, the principal is the public agency and the agent is the private agency (Hammerschmid & Angerer 2005, Bovaird 2004). Entwistle (2005) hypothesizes that “the strains of externalisation are likely to arise not so much in concrete service outputs, but in some of the
softer, more intangible, aspects of service delivery. ” Such dynamics are certainly at play in the government school environments studied in this dissertation. Chapter 5 in particular looks at the clashes that occur between government and NGO personnel at the school level, where these so-called intangible aspects of service delivery come into play. Klijn & Teisman (2003) point out that in some cases, public actors' objectives are to accomplish their sector-specific goals and private actors' objectives are to make profit. This formulation applies less to the empirical situation under consideration in this dissertation because, as mentioned before, profit in this case is conceptualized in a multitude of ways, none of which are monetary. Rather, the principals are defined more broadly to include actors such as students and parents, while profits come in the form of positive learning outcomes and the sustainability of the intervention.

Another group that stands to lose or gain based on the results of the project is the citizens who receive the service or product that the partnership will provide. The literature tends to either neglect this group or lump it in with the public agency instead of considering it separately. Under this conceptualization, agents on both sides of the public-private divide could make decisions that are not optimal for the recipient citizens. And in some cases, tax money pays for the program, meaning the citizens are bearing the risk in the same way that principals are in the for-profit firm scenario. Both of these conceptualizations of the principal-agent problem point out threats to the success of collaborations, and research has appropriately identified project leadership, risk management, and accountability of parties involved as three important criteria in ensuring the success of any project. This framework applies well to educational partnerships: principals include students, parents, and funding organizations while agents include teachers, NGOs, government agencies, and project leaders. This broad conceptualization of the principal

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within the principal-agent framework, as it applies to educational partnerships, is discussed in the appendix of this dissertation, where I examine monitoring mechanisms between principals and agents.

**State-society collaboration: State complementarity, embeddedness, and autonomy**

Peter Evans (1996) identifies state complementarity and embeddedness as two key concepts for understanding cooperation between the state and citizens. Evans (1995) also identifies autonomy as a key factor for developmental success. Complementarity refers to “mutually supportive relations between public and private actors.” Government and private actors are each suited to deliver certain types of inputs most efficiently. Combining these types of inputs results in most efficient output. Embeddedness means “ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide” (Evans 1996). Autonomy means that the state is able to act separately from any private elites, other private actors, and non-state interests (Evans 1995). Evans poses the question of whether the occurrence of synergy is just based on “sociocultural endowments that must be taken as givens” or if you can make it happen on purpose “over relatively brief periods of time.” He answers by saying that in some cases the level of social capital or type of political regime might be too deficient to construct any synergy deliberately. But in many cases it is possible. Evans advocates the changing of social identities by getting community members to reidentify themselves as people who can benefit from cooperation rather than as victims, carefully choosing the organizational forms that will conduct projects and redefine problems (Evans 1996, p. 1129).
The above work by Evans is very compatible with findings from related research. Ostrom (1996) provides empirical evidence of how state actors' encouragement of citizens to participate in programs had huge impact on the level of synergy, stressing that the way in which the state reaches out is important in development programs. Tendler (1995) provides another reason why government complementarity is beneficial in finding that strong local social capital in many settings is partially a result of previous local government actions. In one example she gives, reformist bureaucrats from a government agency helped create indigenous associations which later lobbied against conservative bureaucrats in the very same agency in order to get services and subsidies in the best interest of local farmers. Scott (1998) provides examples of failed top-down development projects in which governments “see like a state,” meaning they fail to take into consideration local knowledge that is important to the success of projects. In Evans's terms, the governments in these cases were not embedded enough in the reality of local situations, where their plans do not end up being implementable.

This Evans-driven work applies very well to education. However, the structure of the education system may not fit directly into this framework if we consider that there are multiple types of public actors: government school system officials, government school principals/headmasters, and government school teachers. For example, even if government schools in a particular community have teachers who are very embedded, it is possible that the school system officials are not embedded. In this scenario, one type of government actor (teachers) is embedded while another type (officials) are not, even though they both represent the government in the same school system. One type of public actor (teachers) being embedded in the community does not mean that other public actors in that same chain of command (district
officials) are also embedded\textsuperscript{9}. The same follows for NGOs, which consist of organization leaders at the top, program managers in the middle, and teachers at the school level. The level of embeddedness between government and NGO actors can vary at different levels along the chain. Just because the government and NGO teachers are well embedded with each other does not mean that the government officials and NGO leaders will also be equally embedded with each other. This non-uniform or “lopsided” embeddedness is discussed in Chapter 6.

Discussion

The three sociological perspectives reviewed each consider a different aspect of state-society partnerships and raise unique under-researched questions. Neo-institutional theory applies to the forms that partnerships end up taking, how those forms relate to what is considered normal and legitimate, and whether people feel pressure to end up copying each other. It raises the question of how and when is copying useful in state-society collaboration. These considerations are revisited in Chapter 4. Principal-agent theory applies to the alignment of the desires of those who stand to lose or gain from work with the actions of those executing the work. It relates to questions related to corruption, how to carefully form partnerships and monitor all of the actors within them, and how to measure success in partnerships given that success may be different to each party involved. These issues are considered in the appendix. The Peter Evans-driven view that the state should have complementarity, embeddedness, and autonomy apply to how the state should be positioned relative to private and civil society. This begs the question of how state-society relationships, especially informal ones, should be healthily

\textsuperscript{9} It could also be the case that the relationship between the teachers and school system is weak and indirect, mediated by a school principal.
cultivated before formal partnerships are formed and how these relationships should be maintained once partnerships already exist and are considering growth. These questions relate to the organizations’ abilities to create growth and depth in their interventions and are addressed in Chapter 6. The neo-institutional and principal-agent perspectives come from studying behaviors of for-profit firms while the Evans theories come from the study of the state and development itself.

A number of studies on PPPs which do not explicitly invoke any sociological theory (the bulk of existing empirical work on this topic, in fact) can shed further light on the explanatory capability of the perspectives reviewed above. The sheer variety in forms of the partnerships described suggests that 1) isomorphic pressures in this sector are lower than in others; 2) principal-agent problems abound and mechanisms for dealing with them are equally numerous; and 3) in practice, state complementarity, embeddedness, and autonomy are difficult to achieve. Each potential partnership deals with its own national policy and institutional environment as well as its own local context in which the right intervention may be one of a kind, rather than a replication of an intervention from somewhere else.

Even if a partnership adheres to all of the expert recommendations and tries to copy the most legitimate strategies from the most popular PPPs, it could still be the wrong action to take for that particular population. Even if the public actors have strong embeddedness within the partnering private entity, the interests of another principal, the community, can still be left out. Even if the needs of local government are complementary with the capabilities of local NGOs, other private entities with powerful ties to government members could veto the project. Therefore, the explanatory capability of these theories on reported situations that have actually
occurred in the field is extremely circumstantial and messy. Others too have noted how difficult it is to capture theoretical frameworks for PPPs due to their extreme diversity in forms (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff 2011, Bovaird 2004).

**Macroscopic level work**

Even though the government-NGO partnerships of most interest are individual, community level education programs, there are many macro-level phenomena within any developing country that have an impact on these partnerships. Furthermore, many community-level factors that influence partnerships are caused by national-level circumstances including policies governing, encouraging, or discouraging partnership; the institutional environment; and the political regime in power. This section reviews research on these macro-level aspects of state-society partnerships by looking at 1) how national-level policy and governance affects collaboration on individual programs and 2) which institutional environments and political regimes foster collaboration and which do not. This research on macro-level and policy-related phenomena relates to the goals of this dissertation because all of the NGOs studied have to constantly navigate the current political and legal environment to make sure that the strategies they use are likely to succeed given any micro-level constraints. The Right to Education Act (RTE) is a good example of a macro-level characteristic that has dominated the education agenda in a way that has strong implications for Education NGOs attempting to intervene with government school students.
National policy related to collaboration

Brinkerhoff (1999) states that for successful PPPs to occur, governments must “Establish the legal framework necessary to enable civil society organizations to engage in partnerships with the public sector.” Sen (1999) adds that the attitude and policy environment of the government is very important to state-NGO relations. A number of national governments do have policies specifically regarding the formation and operation of PPPs. For example, the Department of Health in South Africa published a document in 1998 with guidelines for PPPs as part of a national strategy to provide public services and infrastructure (Moorman 2001). In India, funding for NGOs is written into national policy for development (Bratton 1989), there is a national-level control program for tuberculosis control which makes tuberculosis PPPs more likely to succeed (Baru & Nundy 2008), and some states have legislation meant to foster the creation of PPPs that build and run hospitals (Bhat 2001).

Separate from a government laying down guidelines for partnerships, Teisman and Klijn (2002) give an example of national legislature voting on the details of a single PPP, a less common way in which governments formally influence partnerships. Furthermore, large intergovernmental organizations such as WHO set guidelines for and engage in PPPs (Buse & Waxman 2001), which component organizations and members can follow as examples. Ebrahim (2001) explains that NGO functions and operations are heavily impacted by global development discourse, continuing to say that “As certain development approaches and strategies fall in and out of favor, they are transmitted to NGOs through a range of mechanisms including consultants, reporting requirements, and conditions of funding.” So the transmission of these approaches to
NGOs, which inevitably will involve the state in many cases, is another way in which public and private actors interact with regards to the policy of development work.

**Institutional environment and political regime**

Heller (2001) points out that in the developing world, the correct institutional environment for democracy to decentralize and involve more people and organizations is relatively rare, especially since many countries only recently transitioned from authoritarian to democratic regimes. Sen (1999) states that “State-NGO relationships vary with political regimes” and “individuals who form NGOs under authoritarian regimes to bring about social change are likely to be distrustful of the state, while individuals who form NGOs for more pragmatic reasons, such as alternative sources of employment, are less likely to be hostile towards the state.” Habib (2003) gives an example of this from South Africa: To combat negative effects of neoliberal economic policies adopted in South Africa post-apartheid, small communities have relied on NGOs and the state depends on these NGOs to provide important services to those communities. Before that, the post-apartheid government replaced old, repressive laws with new ones that allowed community organizing to occur in the first place. Only then did any kind of environment for collaboration occur (Habib 2003). Based on evidence from India, Sen (1999) points out that local politics, associational culture, and institutional histories are important to understanding local NGO-state relations in any particular area. Regarding development, Clark (1995) writes “A paramount factor is the nature of the relationship between the NGO sector and the state. Government policies, practices and even attitudes can have a pivotal influence on the

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10 While outside of the scope of my dissertation, some research has considered the impact of NGO activity on policy (see Kim 2009, Kingdon 2007, Jagannathan 2001).
capacity of NGOs to operate and grow.” Moorman (2001) adds that “An effective and supportive institutional framework is necessary to support implementation of PPPs.”

The nature of political regime is also important in understanding state-society synergy. Clark (1995) writes “Governments may present opportunities for NGO collaboration. Where this allows the NGOs to retain their own agenda and remain accountable to their traditional constituency, this can offer a win-win situation, especially in the promotion of participatory development approaches.” Coston (1998) points out that a regime that does not accept institutional pluralism is one in which NGOs will have difficulty operating, let alone collaborating with the state. She says that there is potential for working together or peaceful coexistence in a state that does accept institutional pluralism. Bratton (1989) explains that “States with civilian constitutions that provide for freedom of association are more likely to tolerate NGO activity than military or martial law regimes.” He continues to state that “NGOs are therefore also likely to find encouragement in countries where political parties are weak and politics are conducted along personalistic and patronage lines.”

When government and NGOs share a common vision, collaboration can occur and be effective (Jagannathan 2001, Najam 2000). Najam (2000) gives a strong example of this from Colombia and Brazil where nongovernmental networks run effective national family planning programs, which work so well because “in both cases the goals and preferred strategies of these groups and the governments are in tandem.”
Discussion

There is clear consensus in the literature that an open, democratic state that is interested in involving many people at the community level is best for state-society relationships and a closed, repressive state is worse. Policy, institutional culture and history, and nature of the political regime all impact the extent to which the state is open and democratic. Policy is a formal, written influence while the latter two are informal influences. There is clear agreement among scholars that all three are important factors in determining the potential for and outcomes of state-society collaboration. These are national-level factors that can influence the operations of NGOs and PPPs at the local level. For example, if the state does not acknowledge institutional pluralism (Coston 1998), they could have laws in place that govern the day to day operations of all small NGOs that operate just in one community. Oppositely, a state that does embrace institutional pluralism, as in the South African examples provided by Habib (2003) and Moorman (2001), may pass laws and put forth guidelines for partnerships that help NGOs operate at the local level or at the very least give them the freedom to operate how they wish.

While there is this strong consensus, the running theme in this review that every situation is different is still at play when looking at these national-level phenomena. Clark (1995) offers an apt reminder of this: “The factors determining the NGO-state relationship and the policy instruments available to the government to influence the operating environment for NGOs are necessarily country-specific.”

The policy climate or national regime in which these NGOs find themselves is one of both indifference and recent change. The indifference is simply because there are no formal mechanisms regulating the formation and maintenance of education PPPs in Delhi, so NGO
leaders and government officials freely negotiate the terms of partnerships rather than following a prescribed procedure. The climate of recent change is due to the 2009 RTE Act which NGOs see as a call to arms to improve the quality of education in government schools and bring high quality education to all students. When NGOs participate in interactions with the government related to scaling up, as examined in Chapter 6, or when the goals of NGO teachers clash with those of government teachers at the school level, as examined in Chapter 5, NGOs can point to RTE and say “We are the agents of change that the RTE is calling for, so you should let us run our interventions in your schools.”

Microscopic level work

This section reviews literature on state-society partnerships at the local level, including examples of individual partnerships, the situations of contracting and cooptation, and a number of individual factors and criteria at the organization level that impact partnership formation, operation, and outcome. Many empirical examples of partnership attempts are also included. Clark (1995) underscores the importance of examining community-level processes in the study of partnerships, separate from any micro-macro linkages: After posing the question of whether micro-level relations can still be healthy even if central government's attitude is negative or neutral, he answers that “NGOs may interact closely with local government and play a strong role in local development activities even where the central government has weak links with NGOs.” This very same lopsidedness, as I call it in this dissertation, is also discussed in Chapter
when looking at the ties between government and NGO actors at various organizational levels, the strength of ties between them, and the implications of these relationships for the growth of educational interventions.

Partnerships in practice

State-society partnerships worldwide span a variety of domains including public and global health (Krupp & Madhivanan 2009; Mavalankar et al 2008; Widdus 2001, 2005), drug development (Croft 2005, Nwaka & Ridley 2003), e-government (Sharma 2007), construction (Tang et al 2010), agriculture (Krishna & Qaim 2007, Evans 1995), law enforcement (Berrien & Winship 1999), manufacturing and distribution (Samii et al 2002), information technologies and communications (Kuriyan & Ray 2009), and of course education (Patrinos et al 2009, Rose 2009, Jagannathan 2001). One particularly successful example from the developing world is in the areas of tuberculosis detection in India (Dewan et al 2006, Sheikh et al 2006, Ambe et al 2005, Rangan et al 2004). Generally, these programs have worked to link individual healthcare providers into a network that can conduct tuberculosis screening within large local populations (often very crowded urban centers). These programs have been overwhelmingly successful in the detection and referral of patients with tuberculosis, in large part due to a national-level control program that is in place (Baru & Nundy 2008). Research specifically on unsuccessful partnerships is much more limited (see Hammerschmid & Angerer 2005, Greve 2003).
Contracting, cooptation, and autonomy

Contracting and cooptation are not the main partnership types of interest but are so common that they deserve mention. A number of partnerships between public agencies and private actors involve contracting: the government agency will pay the private party to do a project or provide a service. Bratton, writing over 25 years ago in 1989, points out that even then in particular countries the government had handed over certain development projects to NGOs. More recently, Baqui et al (2008) and Baru and Nandy (2008) point out that contracting in which an NGO runs a public health program for the government can be quite successful. Construction is another area in which contracting is common (see Tang et al 2010). Most work on state-society collaboration does not distinguish between contracting and what Coston (1998) describes as collaboration, in which public and private parties have closer-to-equal control and effort into the project. Many recommendations for maximizing success (eg. having good state-society relations, managing risk properly, etc) in the literature, which could apply to any type of partnership, actually come from empirical examples of contracting.

State cooptation is a situation that NGOs are wary of when partnering with government bodies. Governments may feel threatened by NGO activity (Fisher 1997). NGOs frequently want to maintain their autonomy. Tendler (1995) writes that “NGOs fiercely proclaim their differentness and 'autonomy' from government as their 'comparative advantage.’” Mitlin et al (2007) put it well when pointing out that “NGOs are part of while trying to be apart from the political economy” (their emphasis). This is a difficult tussle that NGOs face between being integrated to a beneficial extent with government structures while also trying to remain separate enough to have control and autonomy over their own work. Evidence from Ramanath (2008)
shows even *while* engaged in partnerships, many of the NGOs working with government bodies in some capacity still see themselves as activists rather than collaborators of the government. Mohan (2002) presents an example of the state coopting NGOs to gain control under the guise of supporting decentralization:

“The central state in Ghana has used civil society organisations to drive local politics and actively promoted decentralisation as a means of consolidating rural support. On an even more subtle level we saw how some NGO officials purposefully misrepresent themselves to blur the boundaries between civil society and the state in an attempt to present themselves and the party in a positive light by utilising the financial resources of the NGOs.”

He adds that this form of government cooptation also shifts extra risk onto NGOs and makes them responsible for providing grassroots development. Smith (1997, as cited in Najam 2000) provides an example from Kenya in which a government clampdown on NGOs led to many being converted into government operated NGOs while others chose to shut down, leaving just a few hold-outs to continue in the new repressive environment. It is not uncommon for NGO leaders to formally join the government, in some cases because they believe doing so can help their cause and in others because they are recruited by the government (Kim 2009, Mitlin et al 2007). This is another form of cooptation.

There is also the less-studied possibility that a different type of cooptation could occur. Based on a case from South Africa and review of other literature, Miraftab (2004) argues that out of the state, private sector firms, and disadvantaged communities, private sector firms win out the most in PPPs at the expense of the other two, all under the guise of neoliberal push to decentralize. Tendler (1995) contends that cooperatives and NGOs often end up being run by local elites to serve their own interests rather than those of disadvantaged communities.
Overall, loss of NGO autonomy and cooptation by the state or for-profit groups is viewed negatively and a clear threat to both partnership formation and NGO operations in general. It is especially problematic for poor communities depending on services from partnerships or NGOs. Threat of autonomy loss is a definite concern and should be examined more in the study of partnerships.

*Local embeddedess and public-private relationships*

As discussed in the *Sociological traditions and frameworks* subsection, embeddedness means “ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide” (Evans 1996). Regarding the importance of local social capital and social capital formation (separate from the issue of public-private relations) see Ostrom (1996), Evans (1996), and Tendler (1995). A lot of research argues that personal connections between the members of private organizations and government agencies in any potential or ongoing partnership is important (Tang et al 2010, Selsky & Parker 2005, Sen 1999, Ebrahim 2001, Jagannathan 2001). Ramanath (2008) gives examples of NGOs being able to achieve favorable outcomes and agreements when they have good connections with local bureaucratic elites. However, existing research does not get more specific than this. There are no studies specifically about the nature of these personal relationships or how specifically they lead to partnership formation or contribute to partnership operation.

Obviously, these good relations that are found to be so important do not always exist. Sen (1999) gives an explanation of why local state-society relations can often be negative:

“[State-NGO hostility] is especially true for rural areas, where the projects of empowerment oriented NGOs oppose the power nexus and interests of the lower
levels of bureaucracy and local elites, creating antagonism toward such NGOs. When NGO officials educate a group of landless labourers about legal minimum wage requirements and the mechanism to acquire them, it is likely that the labourers will demand such a wage. Local landlords will probably resist these demands and will consider the NGO officials as threats to their control over labour.”

This brings up the possibility of local level government-NGO relations being antagonistic in a particular community while the national institutional environment for partnership is the opposite. It is likely that this is a frequently occurring situation in countries known to be favorable towards NGOs such as Uganda and India. In either case, there is clear consensus that personal relationships are important for partnerships but very little research exists that has any detail about them or examines the important question of how these relationships are cultivated. Chapter 4 presents an example in which parents and teachers, in one school in which Aspire operated, were unhappy with an aspect of the programming and rebelled until Aspire agreed to change its strategy in that one school. This is an example of a time when local level relations between the two partners were antagonistic while nothing changed at the higher, administrative levels. Such differences that can exist within a single partnership are examined in Chapter 6, where the relationships between government and NGO actors at various levels in each organization is examined.

Decisionmaking, leadership, and oversight

Who will make decisions and be in charge, how a project will be organized and supervised, and how all participating organizations will be held accountable for their responsibilities are all very prominent in the literature as having a major impact on partnership formation, operation, and outcome. Citing projects with successful leaders, Sagalyn (2007)
explains “The planners in charge of these projects knew how to cultivate coalitions of support, market their projects’ strategies, and capture attention, especially from the media.” Moorman (2001) recommends “the appointment of a dedicated project manager, the establishment of a PPP forum with all relevant stakeholders, building capacity of management and staff, marketing of the strategy and adequate monitoring.” Edelenbos & Klijn (2009) find that desired outcomes in cases they studied are more likely when PPPs are managed with a process management style (“guiding the process by reacting flexibly to changes and by bringing different actors together”) rather than a project management style (results-focused). A number of other studies make similar statements or study decisionmaking and leadership in partnerships further (eg. Townsley 2014, Edelenbos & Teisman 2008, Klijn et al 2008, Sheikh et al 2006). The take-away point of this research is simply and obviously that good leadership is important, and nobody disagrees. This difference between process and project management can be seen within the strategies of the three cases.

*Other criteria for partnerships*

There are a number of other criteria for individual partnerships mentioned in the literature. Below is a selected list of these criteria along with sources where more information can be found.

1. *Accountability:* All parties need to be held responsible for their assigned work.

2. **Capacity and infrastructure**: Both private and public entities need to be sure that the local capacity and infrastructure is available for the project to succeed before partnering. See example in Rangan et al 2004.

3. **Corruption**: While not mentioned much in the partnership literature, this is known to be a huge problem in the developing world. Clark (1995) points out the “rapid ascension of 'bogus' NGOs which serve their own interests rather than those of vulnerable groups.”

4. **Funding**: All projects need to be funded to work and availability of funding from either the partnering entities or a third party will heavily impact the nature and success of the partnership and its projects. Third-party funding can sometimes be problematic or controversial (Clark 1995). See Tang et al (2010), Brinkerhoff (2003).

5. **Public pride and desire for autonomy**: Entwistle (2005) found that government employees in the United Kingdom are against partnering with the private sector because they believe that the public sector 1) will treat workers better, 2) should be the only one doing the type of work in question, 3) should not cede control to the private sector, 4) will provide better quality and quantity of service, and 5) should perform certain core functions alone.

6. **Risk management**: Public and private entities must allocate all financial risk carefully. PPPs are inherently very risky (Greve 2003, Grimsey & Lewis 2002). Also see Tang et al (2010), Nisar (2006).
Gaps in the literature that this dissertation addresses

This section discusses gaps in the literature that pertains to education PPPs and directions for further research, most of which are addressed in this dissertation itself. These gaps include: 1) The need to understand the specific relationships between government and NGO actors at all levels of organization to understand how these relationships lead to healthy partnership formation, maintenance, and growth. These dynamics are addressed in Chapters 5 and 6. 2) The need to not only evaluate PPPs based on how well the government and NGO partners work together but also based on the extent to which they positively impact students. All chapters in this dissertation attempt to prioritize student learning outcomes and the teaching behaviors that cause them above all other results. 3) The need to examine the actors within each side of each partnership and their own motivation and incentive structures for either engaging and participating with enthusiasm or disengaging and going about business as usual without concern for the other party. Chapter 5 addresses this gap from the point of view of the teachers at the school level while Chapter 6 addresses it from the viewpoint of government school officials and NGO leaders.

Speculation, empirics, and details

Right now the study of state-society collaborations suffers from a lack of empirical research and detail, as some scholars agree (Patrinos et al 2009, Schaferhoff et al 2009). Many broad statements are made, for example saying that personal relationships between members of private and public organizations is good for partnerships, but no details about how this
phenomenon works are available. Who exactly are these relationships between and what are their roles in their respective organizations? How do they lead to partnership formation and do they help maintain healthy partnerships? Who initiates discussion about the partnership? How are these personal relationships affected by national policy/regime/environment? When do these relationships not lead to healthy partnerships? Does the private side or public side tend to initiate more often? There is clear consensus that these relationships matter but none about how exactly they work. And what about how that relationship functions once the project is formed? Local operations and daily interactions must have a large impact on project results but there is no empirical work yet on these day-to-day aspects of PPPs. Most work just describes an entire partnership project in a single paragraph without any information that would be useful to someone starting their own project. It is a very macroscopic approach to studying partnerships so far. This dissertation answers some of the questions posed above by examining the relationships between government and NGO teachers at the school level in great depth. These findings are presented in Chapter 5, in which the contrasting styles, habits, and cultures of these two types of teachers are examined and analyzed.

One reason that the questions mentioned above are critical to answer is because the research that has been conducted so far has yielded consensus in many areas. The theory on state-society collaboration is developed enough that one can confidently point to criteria that lead to successful partnerships and sociological frameworks that are useful to understand PPPs. There is no need for yet another paper to tell us that good relations and good leadership are good. It is time to start looking at how exactly good relations and good leadership work and how to make them happen. As Fisher wrote in 1997,
“There are relatively few detailed studies of what is happening in particular places or within specific organizations, few analyses of the impact of NGO practices on relations of power among individuals, communities, and the state, and little attention to the discourse within which NGOs are presented as the solution to problems of welfare service delivery, development, and democratization.”

This is still the case 20 years later, especially with respect to evidence and research at the local and operational level. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap by providing an empirical study that looks closely at organizational dynamics to understand the ways in which PPPs succeed and fall short.

*Who benefits from PPPs and how much?*

The study of state-society development partnerships is focused heavily on the public and private organizations involved and not enough on the outcomes for the populations meant to benefit from the partnerships’ work. Most discussion in the literature is about the agreements between public and private organizations. While it is certainly mentioned that community involvement and participation would be nice, any discussion of community members usually stops there. Many studies insinuate that a partnership that merely did not fall apart is a successful one, without any mention of impact on communities. Ideally there would also be two separate and equally important measuring sticks for partnerships: 1) are the public and private entities working well together? and 2) are the target populations being served properly?

Another very important but under-researched question is who exactly benefits from state-society partnerships. Kuriyan & Ray (2009), studying telecenter projects in two different states in India, find that the projects benefit the middle class more than the poor. It is important to determine which populations are served and/or take advantage of the program. If an
otherwise-smoothly running program is taken advantage of by those who do not need the service at the expense of the poor who do, then the program may not actually be practicing a form of education that is useful for development.

These questions and concerns are addressed throughout the dissertation. Chapter 4 examines how each NGO uses a different strategy to deliver educational services, with each strategy in turn having consequences for how well teachers are able to impact students at the school level. Chapter 5 investigates the differing approaches of government and NGO teachers and the impact these approaches have on the learning environment of students. Chapter 5 also treats student and parents as key stakeholders (as “principals”) within a framework for monitoring the agents of the education system. Chapter 6 examines the question of how effectively these target populations, the students and the parents, have to be impacted in order for an intervention to scale to more schools and classrooms, ultimately finding that sustainability rather than buy-in or impact is all that is sufficient to allow organizations to scale further.

*What do the people involved want?*

Very little research on state-society collaboration involves the researcher actually talking with people in either public or private organizations that partner with each other (notable exceptions are Townsley 2014 and Entwistle 2005). More research needs to ask individuals who work for government agencies, individuals who work in NGOs, and poor community members whether they would like state-society partnerships in their local community, how they want those partnerships to work, and who all would be involved. As mentioned above, a lot of the literature assumes that a PPP is something that just happens rather than being the sum of the actions of
individuals who made them happen. These individuals need to be incorporated into this field of research as soon as possible.

One useful piece of research reviewed is Entwistle's (2005) study of interviews with civil servants about their attitudes towards collaboration with the private sector. This allows for true micro-level insight into the phenomenon. How much do NGO people want to work with government people and vice-versa? To what extent do they see working with the other as useful towards accomplishing their goals? Ultimately the decision of whether or not to collaborate comes down to just a few people on each side. So what are their own thought processes and personal costs and benefits when it comes to choosing to collaborate or not? How do they respond to the common criticism that it is too much of a headache for them to partner with others and that it is in their best personal interest to just keep their jobs they way they are (unchallenging, unrisky, and stable)?

It would be an overstatement to claim that this dissertation has been able to tackle all of these important questions. Nevertheless, the empirical and analytical work presented in Chapters 5 and 6 do represent a good starting point to understanding the motivations and preferences of government and NGO teachers (Chapter 5) and government school officials (Chapter 6) when it comes to forming, maintaining, improving, and growing partnerships.
Chapter 3. Setting, Cases, and Methods

This chapter describes government schools in New Delhi, background information about the three NGOs -- Simple Education Foundation (SEF), Aspire, and Teach for India (TFI) -- that were studied in-depth as cases, and the research methods that I used to study them. The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with these basic details about the setting, cases, and research methods in preparation for reading Chapters 4-6, which address the empirical research questions put forth in Chapter 1. More specifically, in this chapter, I present details on the government school system that were left out of Chapter 1. I then present key information about each NGO related to their history, curricular strategies, size within Delhi, organizational philosophy, and plans for the future. I finish the chapter with a description of the methods I used to gather and analyze the data for this dissertation, including the efforts I made to immerse myself in the lives of the NGO teachers that I studied and identify the most important findings that emerged from my fieldwork.

Background information on government schools in India

While the nature of instruction and day-to-day dynamics within government schools are most closely addressed in Chapter 5, this section provides an overview of the government school system in New Delhi. Since the 2009 Right to Education Act (RTE), the government is required to provide a school that all children between the ages of 6 and 14 can attend near their home.
Furthermore, all children within this age range are required to attend school according to the law and enrollment has increased significantly\textsuperscript{11}. However, quality of teaching is still lacking because feasible measures have not been put into place that will lead to positive learning outcomes. Teacher absenteeism is widespread and a culture of learning in which student outcomes are prioritized is many years away from being the norm.

The personnel working at government schools are all teachers who have received training through government training academies before receiving jobs at schools. Being a government school teacher is a coveted job, especially because government teachers are paid well and have job tenure. Unless they do anything criminal or heinous, government teachers cannot be dismissed until the forced retirement age of 62 (in most cases). Furthermore, teachers who have been working in the system their entire lives can earn anywhere from 40,000 to 70,000 rupees per month in salary, which is quite comfortable. Each school is managed by a principal, or headmaster, who is also a teacher by training and has been promoted into that role. All of the classroom teachers fall next within the organizational hierarchy at the school. There are no mid-level administrators such as an assistant principal. There is just one headmaster and all of the classroom teachers who make up the staff at one government school. Therefore, these personnel alone are required not only to conduct all of the teaching at the school, but also to do all of the administrative work.

This administrative work is conducted by teachers throughout the school day, while the students are present, rather than being conducted before or after school. This additional work that

\textsuperscript{11} As stated in Chapter 1, the net enrollment ratio in 2005-06 for classes (grades) 1-5 was 84\% nationwide and 66\% in Delhi alone (NUEPA 2007). In 2015-16, this ratio was 87\% nationwide and 93\% in Delhi (NUEPA 2016).
teachers do includes bank paperwork, ordering uniforms, inputting attendance or other information into computers, collating attendance data, doing election-related outreach at certain times of year, collecting census data, and preparing textbooks to be distributed to students. Most students receive a small cash transfer that goes to their family if they attend school. This money is transferred directly to a bank account in the name of each student’s parents. Physical account statements and account booklets are managed through the school. Teachers have to spend time sorting through the booklets and sending the appropriate paperwork home with the students. Sometimes, this paperwork requires signatures from parents on pieces of paper that are sent home with students. When a student brings the signed paperwork back into school, the teachers reattach this paper to the student’s file. With no support staff to help, such administrative tasks eat away at the time that teachers can spend in their classrooms with students. It is extremely common during the school day for teachers to be in the school’s main office to perform one of these tasks while those teachers’ classrooms are left unattended.

Delhi government schools follow the curriculum written and distributed by the National Council Of Educational Research And Training (NCERT). The NCERT produces publicly available textbooks for every school subject at every grade level. As an example of the subjects included in the curriculum, at the fifth grade level, students are required to learn mathematics, Hindi/Urdu, English, and environmental studies. Eighth grade students learn mathematics, English, Hindi/Urdu, social science, Sanskrit, and yoga. Twelfth grade students can study mathematics, physics, accountancy, sanskrit, Hindi/Urdu, English, biology, history, geography, psychology, sociology, chemistry, political science, economics, business studies, heritage crafts, and new age graphics design. The textbooks for all of these subjects are freely available at the
corresponding grade level here: [http://epathshala.nic.in/e-pathshala-4/flipbook/](http://epathshala.nic.in/e-pathshala-4/flipbook/) (as of September 2017). The state government provides all of the necessary textbooks for free to every single government school student in the state, newly printed each year. Those who attend private schools are required to buy their own textbooks, which in many cases may not be the NCERT ones.

The RTE mandates that students cannot be held back in any particular grade level until they finish 8th grade. A six-year-old must be in first grade and a 14-year-old must be in 8th grade. The implication of this rule is that any exams a student takes are not used to determine what the student should learn next. Even a student who completely fails all of the curriculum in a given year must be graduated to the next grade for the following year. Both NGO and even some government teachers report that they must give students passing marks regardless of student performance, meaning that they do not need to take testing or grading seriously. In interviews and conversations during my research, multiple TFI teachers stated that their principal told them to make sure that all students receive at least 75%. Note that in these classrooms, there are a number of students who in reality get almost 0% on the tests.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple Education Foundation</th>
<th>Aspire</th>
<th>Teach for India (TFI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founded</strong></td>
<td>September 1, 2014</td>
<td>2013 on small scale; 2014-15 in 8 schools</td>
<td>2009 school year was first with teachers in government classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size (2015-16 year)</strong></td>
<td>One 20-30 student learning center with one staff member; two other staff members launching project in Kashmir</td>
<td>18 government schools in Delhi with 2-4 Aspire teachers in each; launching 1000-school project in Odisha</td>
<td>~1100 teachers in 7 cities, about 125 classrooms per city on average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td>simpleeducationfoundation.org</td>
<td>aspireindia.org.in</td>
<td>teachforindia.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location(s)</strong></td>
<td>Delhi, Kashmir</td>
<td>Delhi, Odisha</td>
<td>Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention(s) and curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Supplemental (after-school) education with 20 students in Delhi; in process of launching 30-school training program in Kashmir</td>
<td>Remedial and co-teaching support in Delhi government school classrooms; use own curriculum.</td>
<td>Takes over entire classrooms within government schools, keeping those students within the TFI system for the rest of their school careers; uses government curriculum. Lots of professional development for teachers and ex-teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of autonomy</strong></td>
<td>High: constantly changing curriculum on a monthly basis as decided by one main staff member and various advisors</td>
<td>Medium: all teachers use Aspire curriculum that changes yearly</td>
<td>Low: government-supplied curriculum, TFI teachers behave mostly like regular government teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prospects of scaling</strong></td>
<td>Low: hard to replicate even once; would require too much training and monitoring</td>
<td>Medium: very human-capital intensive and requires high flexibility of teachers in their in-school and out-of-school work</td>
<td>High: limited in its ability to change the system and therefore much more replicable than the other two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary/wage for teachers in Delhi</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>9,500 rupees per month</td>
<td>Classroom teachers receive 16,000 rupees per month plus an extra 8,000 for housing if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of government collaboration</strong></td>
<td>Waiting: None in Delhi but want to at some point. Currently working independently with government school students.</td>
<td>Cautious Integration: Students spend 1/3 of time with NGO teacher and 2/3 with government teacher OR NGO and government teachers integrated</td>
<td>Separate system: Students spend ALL their time with the NGO teacher; NGO and government teachers are quite separate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 3.2 - Student experience of each NGO’s programming

This diagram shows how a hypothetical student within the intervention of each NGO experiences a school day, including which type of teacher he or she interacts with and at which times.

TFI students arrive at school in the morning and spend the whole day in a TFI classroom.

Aspire students arrive in the morning and go to a government school classroom with a government teacher at 8:30 a.m. An Aspire teacher will then pull them out at 10:15 to do remedial work in a separate Aspire room. At 11:30, the student will go back to his/her regular government classroom for the rest of the day.

(All timings are just examples and vary in practice)

SEF students go to a government school for the entire school day. At the end of the school day, 12:30 p.m., they go home and then arrive at 2:00 p.m. at the separate SEF Learning Center.
Simple Education Foundation

The smallest of the NGOs that I studied in depth in Delhi is Simple Education Foundation (SEF). SEF is a one-room learning center in Tughlakabad Extension, New Delhi, founded in September 2014. It serves students primarily from one government school, also in Tughlakabad Extension. SEF students are predominantly girls from grades 6-8. Approximately 20-30 students go to the center after school every day except for Sunday each week from 2:00-4:30pm. The main staff member and only adult who comes to the center daily is also the only teacher. He is a former teacher from Teach for India who started SEF as a way to continue to teach and mentor students once his work at TFI was over. This teacher singlehandedly makes all of the decisions and does all of the administrative work for SEF’s Delhi center. Another key characteristic of SEF is its pursuit of the most innovative methods and pedagogy possible to make sure students are well-rounded and practicing more than just the skills necessary to pass tests at school.

The exact location of the center within the Tughlakabad Extension neighborhood has shifted from time to time since its founding. In spring of 2015, when I first began visiting, SEF operated out of a one-bedroom apartment that was rented for 10,000 rupees per month. In the fall of 2015, it ran without paying rent out of the living room of one of the students’ family’s apartment. SEF charges a small fee of approximately 200-300 rupees per month to each student. These fees used to go exclusively towards the rental of a space for the learning center, but now go towards equipment such as laptop computers, which are increasingly being used at the center.

The students go home first after school ends at 12:30 p.m. They are no longer wearing their school uniforms when they come to SEF at 2:00 p.m.
Initially, approximately 40 students would attend SEF on a regular basis, but over summer 2015, the students were split into two centers, one to continue as SEF and the other to be operated by other teachers.

Of the three case studies in this dissertation, SEF is the only one without any formal collaboration with the government school system in Delhi. While there are no plans to work with government in Delhi in the near future, SEF is, as of January 2016, in the final stages of putting together a partnership with the government of Kashmir to run a headmaster and teacher training program in 50-100 schools in one Kashmiri city starting in April for the 2016-17 school year. The exact details have changed frequently during this formative stage and are still in negotiation as of January 2016. The government of Kashmir will partially fund the program, leaving SEF to raise funds for the rest. If the 2016-17 pilot year goes well, the collaboration could be renewed and the program may expand for the year after.

SEF was approached by the government of Kashmir to collaborate, with the goal of helping teachers improve test scores of the students. The sole outcome of interest to the government in this case is standardized test scores because Kashmir ranks so poorly compared to the rest of India on this dimension. As of January 2016, SEF had two other staff members who were just working on the Kashmir project who will relocate there when it launches. The aforementioned Delhi teacher will stay in Delhi and help remotely with the Kashmir project while primarily running the Tughlakabad Extension center.

Though it was not my main focus, I witnessed the formation and evolution of the Kashmir project in the summer and fall of 2015. The SEF team was frequently meeting with representatives of the Kashmir government and changing their minds about the size and scope of
the program, which gradually became smaller over the months. The final decision is a small pilot program with somewhere between 50 and 100 schools and a small selection of teachers from each school to be part of the SEF-led program.

The activities of SEF students in Delhi vary significantly month to month. Since it is a one-room, fully independent, supplemental education operation with just one person making all of the day-to-day decisions, SEF can use any curriculum or pedagogy it wants and change its plans at any point. This circumstance, coupled with a very high motivation to be outside-the-box and creative in both content and method of instruction, leads to constantly changing pedagogy that is highly responsive to student needs and the teacher’s own ideas.

My dissertation fieldwork encompassed two basic phases of SEF structure and pedagogy. I first witnessed the first phase in spring of 2015 which lasted until the start of October 2015. It consisted of 1) short term assignments, lasting for a few days or weeks, and 2) review of materials that students are learning in their government school. For example, in the spring of 2015, a regular afternoon at SEF would involve the students being divided into two groups, which I will call Groups A and B. For one hour, Group A would sit in a circle and review government school curriculum (which they had been taught in their regular government school earlier in the day) along with the teacher. Concurrently, Group B would sit in a separate part of the one-bedroom apartment and work on an assignment independently. An example of an assignment that Group B would do is written responses to prompts. The instructor would provide the students with 20 questions to which they had to write approximately one-page responses in their notebooks in English. He would then review these responses at his home and give feedback to the students the next day. They would complete these responses over the course of a few days
or one week. After one hour was finished, Groups A and B would switch places such that Group B was now reviewing school curriculum with the teacher while Group A was working independently on the writing assignment. In the final 30 minutes of their time together, the teacher and both groups would gather together to discuss what they had learned, hear any announcements, and clean up the center so that it was ready for the next day. During this final 30 minutes, the teacher would ask for volunteers to read aloud one of their responses to the written prompts, sometimes choosing somebody gently if nobody volunteered.

The second phase of structure and pedagogy at SEF began in October 2015. This system placed the students into small teams that worked almost exclusively on a single project for an entire month or two. In the lead-up to this transition in learning models, SEF also changed locations within Tughlakabad Extension (moving out of the rented one-bedroom apartment and into the living room of a student’s family’s home) and purchased laptop computers for students to use. At this point, SEF’s curriculum became much more flexible. The four purchased laptops were Chromebooks that could easily be connected to the Internet. Every day, the teacher would hang a mobile phone in an area of the room near the front window that would receive adequate data reception. He would then activate the mobile hotspot capability on the phone, creating a wireless internet network to which the four laptops could connect. Each of the four teams into which the students were divided had an account on Google and would use Google Drive to conduct and store all of their work.

These teams were referred to as Team Alpha, Team Beta, Team Charlie, and Team Delta, each with its own Google account. Students were expected to store all of their work in these Google accounts during their time working on a project. Once a project was complete (after a
month or two), the teacher would reconfigure the students into new teams and they would again work on another one or two-month long project with their new team, storing all of their work on the laptops. They also continued to make heavy use of their own paper notebooks for much of the interim work required of them during the course of a project. But the final work had to be inputted into the computer, meaning that most of the students became proficient quite quickly in basic computing skills.

A representative example of SEF’s flexibility is the curriculum they followed in December 2015 and January 2016: A computer scientist visited SEF for a single day in November 2015, simply because she had heard about it and wanted to visit the learning center. This visitor was well-versed in teaching the basics of coding and algorithms to young beginners, using resources such as Scratch from MIT and code.org. She visited the center and began talking with the teacher about possible computer-related projects that the students could do. As a result of this short conversation in November, the teacher decided that December and January would be devoted to teaching the students the basics of computer programming. The computer scientist sent him just a few documents explaining how she had lessons on this topic in the past. The teacher then quickly went through portions of it that he thought would be useful (some of which I witnessed during visits to the center) and tested out the various tutorials on code.org that he decided the students would first use before pursuing their final task of creating a game. We even went through some of the material together and he discussed some of his ideas with me, to get my opinions, regarding what the students would do in the first half of this project.

It was decided that first the students would do simple tutorials at code.org for one or two weeks, depending on the speed with which they took to the material. There were only four
computers for approximately 20 students, but the teacher wanted each student to be forced to think about and learn the programming skills in the tutorial (rather than a dominant student completing the tutorial with the other group members passively watching). To compensate for this, the teacher forced the students to do one step of the tutorial at a time, without taking any help from groupmates, and then pass the computer on to the next group member. Students who were not actively taking their turn were supposed to silently think about how to solve the next step of the tutorial, without actually saying anything. For one week, SEF operated in silence as students learned the basics of computer programming without leaving any student behind. After this initial step, the teacher decided to extend this project such that it would last for two months. The students then collaborated within their groups to create games using the tools available at the website, which they presented to each other at the end of January 2016.

Before November 2015, the students completed two projects, each lasting one or two months: one on water scarcity and another on violence against women, also in the same format described above, with the students divided into four teams and inputting all of their final work into the computer. For these projects, they were required to learn basic content about the topic, without the help of the teacher, and then survey members of their own community about their water use habits or about whether or not they had witnessed crimes against women. They periodically (once every four or five days) would present their progress to the rest of the students so that the teacher could see their progress and so that the students could practice for a final presentation that they would give on the final day of each project. These final presentations were lengthy presentations requiring everybody to memorize their part and speak. They also featured presentation slides to be displayed and advanced while speaking. Finally, students were also
required to submit a written report for each project which detailed their work and findings. These projects demonstrate SEF’s flexibility and willingness to adopt new techniques in order to cultivate a broad range of skills in its students.

Aspire

Aspire is a small NGO founded in 2013 with the goal of providing remedial or basic math and Hindi language education to government school students, so that they have a strong foundation to learn more and excel in the rest of their schoolwork. The founder has many years of experience in education and previously engaged in education work for a large foundation, which he left to start this organization, initially using his own money to operate it. Aspire uses their own curriculum that has been pilot tested in a variety of settings to teach students basic math and Hindi language, both thoroughly and efficiently. After doing a small proof-of-principle in a government school in late 2013 and early 2014, Aspire operated for its first full year in eight government schools in Delhi during the 2014-15 school year. It conducted work in 18 Delhi government schools in 2015-16.

Aspire hires its own teachers who have also obtained the same teaching degree that government teachers complete. It then provides brief additional training to these teachers and employs them full-time to provide remedial education for students in government schools. The founder explained to me that Aspire hires from the very same pool of teachers who go into

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13 By fall 2015, Aspire was also experimenting with teaching English, but on a limited basis and not prominently at any schools in which I conducted observations.
regular government teaching jobs to demonstrate that their model can work with any teacher who has a basic certificate. Specially trained teachers are not required. Aspire teachers receive approximately 9,500 rupees per month (about 145 U.S. dollars). Aspire sends 2-4 teachers to each government school with which it partners. In each school, these Aspire teachers have exclusive access to one or two classrooms which are given solely to Aspire. The teachers run their remedial classes out of these rooms, pulling students out from their regular classrooms and bringing them to the Aspire rooms for short portions of the day. Students from the school come through the Aspire classroom(s) to work on math and Hindi with the Aspire teachers. Aspire conducts very diligent record keeping and follow-ups in individually kept folders for each student, which the teachers were always ready and willing to show off to me.

As a young NGO wanting to work directly with the government, Aspire has had to persistently and carefully manage relations with a number of actors and offices within Delhi's government school administration. The organization's founder gave me a detailed account of how they went about cultivating relationships that eventually allowed Aspire to operate in schools. Aspire first had to make direct contact with school officials and request the opportunity to attempt an intervention. After multiple requests, the school officials agreed to let Aspire do a very brief proof-of-principle in just one school. After this went well, meaning that Aspire was able to demonstrate positive learning outcomes for the students involved, Aspire was allowed to launch in eight schools the following year. Aspire tries very hard to be supportive of the entire school wherever they work, constantly making sure that their teachers stay attuned to the needs of the school and try to help out however they can.

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14 In an interview on January 11, 2015.
One aspect of the program that stood out clearly was its painstaking attention to detail and accountability of teachers, meaning teacher accountability both to each individual student and to the organization as a whole. The teachers spend much of their time going through the work of their students page by page, recording progress, and deciding what the student should learn next. For each student, there was a record for math and a record for Hindi containing all of their written work and all of their progress reports. The variety of records kept was extremely detailed. For example, if in Hindi a student was having trouble writing a particular character of the alphabet, this was noted down and followed up on by the teacher until the error stopped. In math, a student's ability to consistently perform particular skills is logged and tracked very carefully over time in detailed and very organized spreadsheets. I was especially impressed to see teachers spending many minutes on each student's folder to review student progress, make notes about what to keep an eye on in the coming weeks, and even discuss the student with other teachers. This type of record keeping is a simple function that Aspire does well compared to government schools and even other NGOs. While government schools are responsible for keeping certain non-academic records for students such as bank papers, there is much less strict keeping of academic records, if at all.

The founder emphasized to me that the teachers hired into Aspire have the exact same schooling and certification as regular government school teachers. This is so that Aspire can demonstrate that their methods are possible to implement without any additional special personnel or resources beyond the training and ongoing management they provide. The value added to the education system by Aspire is clearly in their strategy of how these teachers spend

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15 However, as also mentioned later in the dissertation, Aspire does not keep controlled data on their students or aggregate it in a way that the impact of their program can be measured.
their time, in taking extra time to review progress, and in meeting together as a teaching team on a regular basis. Aspire also uses methods that have been tested by other NGOs and are known to be effective in large trials across India. This also demonstrates that Aspire clearly desires for their model of remedial Hindi and math to spread through the government system after successful pilot projects within government schools. Previous tests using these methods, to the best of my knowledge, had not used government-certified teachers or been conducted in government schools.

Going forward, Aspire plans to legitimize the work they are doing over the next few years in the eyes of the government, build stronger relations with the leadership teams at the schools where they work and at the district level, and then push to incorporate their intervention into the mainstream operations of government schools. By using teachers who have the same training that government teachers receive, Aspire wants to show that their work can be implemented widely across government schools. In the near future, they would like to reach more students both in the schools where they already work and at additional schools. They are also contemplating adding English instruction to their programming.

Teach For India

Founded in 2007 and operating in classrooms since 2009, TFI hires applicants, usually young adults in their 20s, who have completed undergraduate degrees and who want to work as teachers or join the education sector. These “TFI Fellows” (teachers) then work full-time for two
years as classroom teachers in a school that serves underprivileged children in one of seven cities (though this number is frequently growing), one of which is Delhi. TFI makes the arrangements for this with school leadership. The majority of schools that have TFI Fellows are government schools, while a few are private. In Delhi, TFI fellows receive 16,000 rupees (about 240 U.S. dollars) per month plus an additional 8,000 rupee housing stipend if they are not living with family. TFI prioritizes English medium education and holds separate trainings for its Fellows. It uses NCERT curriculum, just like regular government schools, in all of its classrooms in Delhi. TFI has a large administrative apparatus that includes a government relations team, which manages interactions with the government. TFI is funded by a number of corporate sponsors. TFI mimics Teach For America in much of its structure and is part of the global Teach for All network.

TFI has been steadily growing, starting in one city in 2009 and in 2016 operating in seven cities with about 1100 active Fellows in total (Teach for India 2016). TFI has cultivated healthy relationships with corporate sponsors and decision-makers in the government school systems of these seven cities to help assure growth in the future. Since students who have TFI teachers at any point in their school careers are supposed to continue to have TFI teachers for the remainder of their schooling, TFI’s intervention is gradually moving to higher and higher grade levels and putting more TFI teachers at each school that already has a TFI presence. Another plan for the future is to become more integrated with the government and have the government fund the program directly, as I was told in an interview with a member of the government relations team.

Being a large organization with links to the government at multiple levels in the system, TFI is now very entrenched in certain schools and has earned the trust of those at the district
level and above. At the school level, the situation is less clear. One high-level TFI staff person in Delhi pointed out that the officers at the top of the administrative hierarchy generally are supportive of new initiatives and want to see improvement in schools. However, they are obsessed with what he called “quick wins,” meaning initiatives that can show impressive results very quickly since such officers are rotated from post to post so frequently that they cannot wait for a longer project to start and finish. A quick win looks better on their resume. Other than the quick win issue, he believes that they are supportive and this is largely what has allowed TFI to get a foothold in the government systems in many cities.

However, my own observations and the accounts of multiple current and former TFI Fellows indicate that relations are not nearly as healthy at the school level, where TFI Fellows operate one or a few classrooms within a school and the government school teachers and principal operate the rest. In these schools, government teachers and TFI teachers stay very separate, without much socializing or interaction between them. TFI teachers do not follow the habits of the government teachers, which generally involve spending a lot of time outside of the classroom, not catering individually to students of different levels, and not putting in any time planning for class. TFI teachers try to do the opposite of these behaviors and as a result do not tend to get along well or have time to cultivate relationships with government school teachers. The two groups tend to do their own work without bothering the other. There is not any visible cross-pollination of TFI practices into the classrooms of the government teachers. There is also some evidence of government teachers feeling threatened by TFI teachers, presented later in this dissertation.
Within TFI classrooms, the teachers try very hard to emphasize what could be classified as western classroom practices such as raising hands to speak, lining up in order when walking somewhere, sitting in clusters of desks instead of rows, speaking in English whenever possible, etc. A few TFI teachers even go beyond standard classroom practices by making their own curriculum or curriculum modifications, customizing instruction to the various levels of different groups of students, working very hard outside of the classroom, and staying in close touch with the families and communities to which their students belong.

Many Fellows join TFI due to a desire to make change and help the education system. As TFI Fellows, they are making less money than they could in the professions for which their formal education has prepared them. Many have quit or paused more lucrative career paths to join TFI and even work on education for the rest of their lives (TFI reported on their website in 2016 that 64% of their 660 alumni continue to do work related to development or education). This ethos of public service contrasts the motives and observable behaviors of mainstream government school teachers.

**Research methods, approach to fieldwork, and data analysis**

In this section, I describe the methods used in preparing this dissertation. First, I explain the decisions to use qualitative ethnographic methods and to study the three particular cases featured in this research. Second, I describe the daily strategies I used in collecting data, including immersion into the three NGOs and the lives of their personnel as well as techniques I
used to observe interactions between the various actors in the school environment. Third, I present the procedure used to compile, code, and analyze my collected data, beginning with a grounded theory approach and gradually narrowing down and reorganizing my findings into key empirical themes. Finally, I discuss the limitations and generalizability of the research. All of the fieldwork for this dissertation project took place in India from May 2014 to January 2016, during which I spent a total of 17 months in the country.

Methodological choices and case selection

In consultation with my dissertation committee, it was determined that conducting an in-depth study of three education NGOs would be the most effective way to answer my selected research questions. Given the goal of uncovering specific school-level mechanisms through which NGO interventions either succeed or fail, it was necessary to spend a great deal of time within the classroom environment of each NGO I chose to study. Survey data already tells us that learning outcomes are weak in quantitative terms. Therefore, I chose to take an ethnographic and immersive approach to my research to try and uncover school-level phenomena pertaining to why these outcomes may be the case.

When I initially began my fieldwork, I spent time volunteering at one government school in Gujarat and also conducted interviews with members of approximately 50 education NGOs. This allowed me to learn about the government school system in India and about the landscape of NGOs that take a variety of approaches to education. I then selected three organizations -- Teach for India, Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation -- to study closely, because of their interventions in government schools (TFI and Aspire) or with government school students (SEF).
The three organizations also vary in size and age and are located in different stages of evolution from a small program with few students which grows into a much larger one operating in many locations in government partnerships. These differences between the three cases allowed me to study more fully the possible outcomes of NGO-operated education interventions with government school students.

All three organizations that I studied as cases add unique and important analytic leverage to the capabilities of this research. TFI is large and heavily-entrenched in the government school system. Studying TFI allowed me to understand the benefits and detriments of this high level of entrenchment and its consequences for implementing an intervention, both in terms of educational delivery and organizational management. Aspire is already in the government system on a medium scale but the form of its intervention and partnership can still change (as an example in Chapter 4 shows). Studying Aspire allowed me to see how actors at all levels within an education NGO behave when involved in an in-school partnership in its early stages.

When I began my fieldwork, SEF did not operate in any government schools. It was merely their stated goal to improve their instructional practices and eventually partner with the government at an undecided point in the future. Studying SEF allowed me to understand the educational processes and organizational decision-making of an NGO that is small and unencumbered enough that it has very high autonomy over its own teaching methods but that also wishes to enter into partnership with the government and needs to prepare for doing so. Towards the end of my fieldwork, SEF had entered into an agreement with the government to work in government schools in Kashmir. The emergence of this new partnership shows that SEF was indeed on a path towards working directly within government schools, just like the other two
NGO cases. These three NGOs fell into an analytically useful spectrum of cases which varied in curriculum, autonomy, size, management techniques, and leadership structures.

Ethnography was the logical choice for the method of data collection because it was essential for me to be immersed in the school environment to observe the daily workings of the three organizations. Had I only used interviews or surveys, I would not have witnessed most of the critical interactions in schools or behaviors of government and NGO personnel that ended up forming the empirical backbone of my work. Ethnography also allowed me to engage in interactions with teachers as they were doing their work and understand their own approaches to reporting to management, teaching their students, navigating the school environment, and contributing to the growth and progress of their organizations.

At times during this ethnographic fieldwork, I was a participant observer due to my repeated exposure to the same classrooms and personnel. Participant observation is defined as “[A] way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied” (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, p. 3). My research satisfies all of the criteria for participant observation to be a useful method according to Jorgensen (2015, p. 8). Of all qualitative research methods, Gans (1999) considers participant observation to be "the most scientific, because it is the only one that gets close to people." Gans adds, “In addition, it allows researchers to observe what people do, while all other empirical methods are limited to reporting what people say about what they do.” In the case of my fieldwork, operating as a participant observer with the freedom to interact with teachers and engage them in conversations about their work helped me gather data and make additional observations that I would not have been able to make as a silent observer. My status as a
participant observer was mostly “moderate participation” (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, p. 23) or “passive participation” (Jorgensen 2015) with some instances of “active participation” (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, p. 24; Jorgensen 2015). This means that when I was in schools or classrooms, most of my time was spent conducting structured observation or informal interviewing (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, Chapter 8) while I occasionally participated in classroom activity, such as helping students with exercises in their notebooks or teaching something to an entire class at the request of a teacher.

As DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, p. 90) point out, “One of the inherent biases in observation, especially participant observation, is the likelihood that unusual and rare events will be more closely observed and recorded than commonplace events and activities. Jorgensen (2015) also comments on the ability of a participant observer to collect accurate data:

> “Collecting truthful information requires considerable skill in cultivating rapport, making friends, and sustaining trusting relationships with people in the field. Simply put, people who do not know you or trust you are not likely to be cooperative in providing much data, especially truthful information about the deepest meanings and inner workings of their daily lives. In most settings, it is possible to collect different forms of data by way of a wide variety of means. Observations, for instance, may range from largely unfocused efforts to overview the action to more focused attempts to gather detailed information about specific feelings, meanings, and activities. Participant observers usually ask a lot of questions, many of them causal [sic] and informal, in the course of an investigation.”

To avoid as many of these potential pitfalls as possible, I made sure to triangulate between multiple sources of information, making sure that anything I was told in an interview or observed in a classroom was corroborated through other forms of information and/or observed multiple times in the same way.
Much of my approach to fieldwork was influenced by the works of ethnographers such as Tavory (2010) and Duneier (1999). Both of these ethnographers lived with or near their research subjects and went on to develop close relationships with them. As Tavory points out, the line between fieldwork and friendship is a blurry one and I too encountered this boundary during my research. In the course of spending many hours with the same sets of teachers and students, I became friends with some of the other teachers and was treated as another teacher by many of the students. Without violating any research ethics, these relationships that I built in the field allowed me to gain a fuller understanding of each NGO that I studied because I was able to study the behaviors and attitudes of teachers not only within schools, but also beyond school, as I socialized with teachers at their homes, my home, and public venues, just like Tavory did in the course of his fieldwork.

Duneier addresses multiple additional aspects of the relationship between the participant observer and the information he or she seeks to learn:

“Like all observers, I have my subjectivities. I know that scrupulous adherence to rules of method will not lead necessarily to objective truth. I believe that what is most important is that I try to help the reader recognize the lens through which the reality is refracted” (p. 14).

Following Duneier’s lead, I did my best to uncover the truth through repeated observations and careful documentation of what I observed, but I nevertheless agree with him that there is inherent subjectivity that comes along with this process and to some degree all varieties of social science research. The findings I present here are my best attempt to accurately analyze the phenomena I observed and data I collected. I encourage and welcome those who happen to have both similar and different experiences to what I present here to share what they have learned. Our
understandings of the social processes and mechanisms at play in schools can only be
discovered, refined, confirmed, and acted upon through collective effort and triangulation.

*Day to day field operations*

In order to investigate the work that these three NGOs conducted within government
schools (in the case of TFI and Aspire) and in a learning center with government school students
(in the case of SEF), my main strategy was to spend as much time as possible with NGO
personnel in government schools, at their offices, and at their learning centers. While I was able
to conduct ten formal, audio-recorded interviews with members of these organizations outside of
school, the majority of my interactions took place during the course of structured ethnography
inside of schools and were not audio recorded. Much of the information I found would likely not
have even been divulged to me if I had only been conducting recorded interviews. I would very
frequently encounter a teacher (whether government or NGO), start a conversation with them,
and turn towards talking about education, interventions that I was studying, and their own work
in the school system.

To study the TFI organization and its operations, I spent the majority of my time in two
South Delhi schools. I also made individual visits to approximately ten other TFI schools, met
with or interviewed five city-level staff members, met or interviewed about 20 TFI teachers
outside of school, attended three TFI-organized conferences (meant mainly for their own staff to
attend, allowing me to meet and learn about even more of them), and attended two full-day
city-wide extracurricular events.
Aspire is a smaller operation and I was in regular touch with its founder and one other top level administrator throughout my fieldwork. Aspire was extremely transparent with me and I had full access to all levels of their operations. I often visited their central offices after school with their teachers and chatted with program managers, community relations specialists, and many teachers. At the school level, I spent most of my time at two South Delhi schools in which Aspire works. I also conducted shorter visits to three other South Delhi Aspire schools, as well as visits to special events in other locations, such as a science day event where students from multiple schools were in attendance. I also attended an all-staff meeting in which every Aspire member at any organizational level was in attendance and gave reports on their progress at their own schools.

SEF is the smallest organization I studied, featuring just two staff members and co-founders, one of whom exclusively runs the learning center in Delhi in Tughlakabad Extension (who is referred to as the SEF teacher throughout this dissertation). I would go to the learning center on multiple days each week, often after spending the morning at a TFI or Aspire government school. At the learning center, since most student work was self-directed, there was ample time to talk to the teacher, help out the students however I could (the teacher would often have me evaluate presentations given by the students and I would also help answer questions or give guiding hints to students as they worked in small groups), and even do some of my own writing at times when students were quietly doing their own work. SEF was fully contained within a one-room learning center, so learning fully about the organization was quite straightforward.
The wealth of information I was able to gather was made possible by not only initiating investigative conversations as mentioned above but also by observing interactions of teachers amongst themselves, students and teachers, and students with each other. Note that I never directly interviewed students or anyone who was not an adult. Government school personnel can sometimes be wary of researchers, so I made sure to make it clear that I was conducting research on the NGOs and their work rather than research on the school as a whole. Directly interviewing students would have put my ability to continue to visit schools in jeopardy, so my interactions with students were limited to casual chatting and the occasional times when I was asked to help teach as a volunteer. I got to know the students at SEF the most because of their small class size and because the nature of instruction at SEF allows for outsiders to participate easily. Likewise, I was able to roam around the entire government school more when I was with Aspire teachers than with TFI ones, because Aspire’s programming is naturally more immersed in entire schools than that of TFI. Aspire created a relationship at each school such that it was fine for me, a semi-foreign researcher who spoke Hindi with a foreign accent, to participate in school-wide activities. At one Aspire government school (and only this one), the principal even introduced me to the whole school at the morning assembly on my first day there. And I had long chats with the principal of every Aspire school that I studied, whereas I never spoke very long with the principals at TFI government schools. TFI was clearly a separate program within the larger government school whereas it was known that Aspire is trying to serve the government school as a whole.

I was very frequently able to sit in the back of classrooms and watch all of the activity going on as an invisible observer. Students and teachers would often offer to bring me a proper
chair, but I always opted to sit at an empty bench in the back of the room whenever possible. Students and teachers would usually forget that I was there pretty quickly and go about their business. In many cases, I reached the classroom that I was going to observe before the teachers or students, so within a few days of my coming to their school, I was just a normal part of the classroom to them when they arrived to the classroom. It also helped that the teachers treated me as a fellow teacher most of the time rather than as a researcher. From the students’ perspective, I was just another TFI or Aspire volunteer or teacher coming through their school. Government teachers even had me teach in their place sometimes, further validating my status as a teacher in the eyes of the students. So there is no reason to think the students would act any differently around me than around the other teachers.

Beyond the walls of the schools, I became immersed in the worlds of the teachers, often spending the whole day with them, including going home with them to their apartments\(^\text{16}\) or having them come to mine after school, having dinner (or lunch on free days) together, chatting with them regularly on WhatsApp, inviting them to any social events I went to or hosted, etc. I learned a great deal about the lives of the teachers and what is happening in the education system through these informal interactions. This is how I could understand the work (or lack thereof in some cases) that the teachers of each NGO put in outside of school. It also provided the opportunity for me to ask interview-style questions to the teachers that I could not ask during the school day. It was extremely easy to blend into the social circles of the teachers while also learning from them. They were usually quite eager to talk about education and their work with a semi-outsider like me. In addition to discussing and analyzing with me the NGOs they worked

\(^{16}\) At the schools in which I conducted most of my observations, most of the teachers lived together as roommates in nearby apartments.
for and their daily teaching lives, teachers were also very eager to share their thoughts on the education system at large. Social interactions with teachers often turned to ideas on how to improve education programs and new ideas for school or community based interventions.

Data processing and analysis

When gathering data at schools or in the other settings mentioned above, I took notes with my observations, recollections of conversations right after they occurred, and time-stamped notes about events I was observing as they unfolded. I made certain that these notes were typed and backed up within a few hours of taking them. I stored the notes from each day in a separate database entry.

Every week, I compiled the notes from the preceding seven days, reviewed them all, and coded portions of each note with keywords or themes. For example, if a portion of my field notes pertained to the scalability of the NGOs, I would label that portion “scalability.” Then, as specific sub-aspects or themes of scalability emerged over the course of the fieldwork, such as the ease with which an intervention could be replicated (coded “replicability”) or the extent to which an intervention was similar across various settings (coded “similarity” and later “fidelity”), I revisited all instances of the “scalability” label to add sub-codes.

In the case of the few recorded interviews that I conducted, I took down extensive field notes right after the interview. I then supplemented these notes by listening to the interview and adding to my notes to complete a full summary of what was told to me by the interviewee. I then added these notes to my database of notes, to be coded at the end of the week along with the rest
of the field notes. I also used portions of my coded notes to create research memos approximately once every two months.

Other codes that were used in the initial stages of fieldwork and coding were: teacher authority, time wasting, organization, disorganization, chaos, yelling, discipline, class control, creative pedagogy, syllabus problem, teacher inexperience, technology and digital learning, organizational deficiencies (structural, organizational characteristics that were out of the hands of individual teachers), idle students, dialogue, culture of learning, and many more. As in the example with scalability above, many of these themes led to sub-themes that allowed me to further analyze them and their role within the larger picture of the operation of the three NGOs.

My initial approach to gathering data was to simply ask as many questions as possible, observe as much as possible around me, and understand how the interventions I was observing attempted to impact student learning. Once an initial set of codes (themes) was yielded from taking this broad approach, I started to shortlist ones that were most important to the processes of NGOs partnering with government schools, such as organizational structures, management techniques, syllabus problem, curricular choices, culture of learning, dialogue, monitoring, replicability, fidelity, and scalability. I then investigated these selected themes with more attention every day, eventually gathering significantly more data on them and choosing to feature many of them in the empirical portion of this dissertation.

Once my fieldwork was complete, I reviewed all of the coded notes, grouping them once by organization and another time by theme, re-coding portions of notes as necessary. At the end of this process, fewer codes remained than initially, as I focused in on the topics that are featured in Chapters 4-6. This review allowed me to make certain that I was not leaving out any important
details about a particular organization when considering each selected theme. It also forced me to consider any evidence that suggested explanations or trends that were alternative to my preliminary conceptualization of the dissertation’s main arguments.

Limitations and generalizability of the research

Many people ask me to what extent the research presented in this dissertation is generalizable, conclusive, or useful. While these findings are certainly not more representative than, for example, the ASER Centre report (2017) that is generally regarded to be reliable and shows how low math and literacy levels (for particular student ages) tend to be across the country, my research helps us understand why this is the case. Researchers physically need to go into classrooms in person to observe and understand what is happening, how exactly students and teachers behave, and how those behaviors relate to opportunities for successful learning and learning outcomes.

Therefore, while I cannot say if the dynamics I have observed are occurring in 30% of schools or 80% of schools, I can say with utmost certainty that they are happening, in absolute terms, in multiple schools and that they are directly linked to the learning environments in which students are taught in these locations. Once we know that math and literacy levels are low in a particular population (as survey results tell us), we researchers have to go into that population’s schools to understand the mechanisms that lead to those particular levels. It is not useful to just know the levels without knowing why they end up as they do, including learning which teaching behaviors (including the ones the NGOs are introducing with their interventions) can and cannot
remedy the situation.

To entertain the question even more, it may not even matter if the research presented here is not generalizable. Over 25 million people live in and around New Delhi. If New Delhi were its own country, it would rank at approximately number 50 in population size, larger than about 170 other countries or territories in the world. Even if what I found is only useful to a subsection of the New Delhi school system, it still stands to affect many students in absolute numbers if the recommendations were to be implemented.

We know learning outcomes are lower than ideal. Researchers have to go into schools and learn why this is the case. What are the mechanisms? What is going on inside those school walls and in NGO activity that is preventing outcomes from being better? The answers to these very important questions are largely qualitative in nature. We already have quantitative data and evidence showing that learning outcomes in aggregate are weak. Researchers now have to flood in and find out why. This dissertation is just one part of that massive effort. I encourage other researchers to look into this and related topics and share their findings.

Even though the organizations in this study plan ahead, put skilled personnel in place, and try hard to make an impact, they do not always keep good data on their students. Even Aspire and SEF, which have very good records on the learning progress of their students, do not have systematic aggregated data that can be compared to outcomes of similar students (in a control group) who are not part of their interventions. Even TFI, the oldest of the three NGOs studied, is too young to yet have adult alumni of their program. There is no data yet on labor market, marriage, or other outcomes in adulthood of those affected by these interventions. If such data existed, then this dissertation would instead have taken a mixed methods approach, devoting
just as much time to quantitative analysis of this data as it would to the qualitative work that was conducted in classrooms and schools. But in the absence of reliable large-scale data, focusing purely on ethnography, participant observation, and interviews was my clear dominant research strategy.
Chapter 4.. Inside the NGO: How organizational structure and policy shape in-school capabilities

Introduction

This chapter examines internal structures, administrative procedures, curricular plans, and operational decision-making of Teach for India (TFI), Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation (SEF). It explores how the formal policies of these three education NGOs manifest themselves in each school environment and ultimately impact what the organization’s teachers can achieve. More specifically, each NGO has rules for how its teachers will behave at school, how those teachers are supervised, and what specifically will be taught to the students. These rules constrain or enable teachers in their capabilities while teaching.

In this chapter, I first present empirical findings from each NGO. I then analyze causes of the differences between organizations, reasons that each organization would be so different, and what the different approaches mean for the students. I then reflect on what these findings mean for neoinstitutional theory and generate recommendations for education NGOs in urban Indian areas. More specifically, this chapter addresses the management of teachers and everyday teaching dynamics, curricular plans and classroom dynamics, extracurricular activities, and responses to emergencies and criticisms of each NGO. It then looks at the differences between the three organizations to draw out key outcomes, understand the findings through the perspective of neoinstitutional theory, and generate recommendations for NGOs.
The most important findings of this chapter are as follows: 1) A rigid adherence to government curriculum (as with TFI) causes the “syllabus problem” that teachers have to rush to deliver the required curriculum all within a single semester, causing them to leave behind many of the students who need more time to learn a concept. A more flexible model (like Aspire’s or SEF’s) allows teachers to slow down and teach material that is more appropriate for each student’s learning level. 2) Organizational support of teachers, such as providing solutions manuals or additional training as needed, impacts teachers’ ability to be fully knowledgeable about the subject matter in the curriculum. 3) Tightly-managed teachers (as in Aspire) are well-integrated into the NGO at which they work while loosely-managed teachers (as in TFI) leave immediately at the end of the school day and are siloed (separated) from the rest of their organization and fellow teachers. Loosely managed structures of teachers also resulted in untrained volunteers teaching in some classrooms rather than trained, full-time NGO teachers.

Management of teachers and everyday teaching dynamics

This section examines how each NGO manages its personnel and how this management relates to the day to day interactions and behaviors of their teachers. It presents data and evidence from each of the three cases and then compares them to determine key findings related to teacher management.
In New Delhi, Teach for India sends one or two teachers to each classroom that they are contracted to work in with the government. These teachers are supervised by program managers. Each program manager supervises about 15-20 teachers (2-4 teachers per school usually) and is required to have a check-in meeting with them 1-4 times per month\(^\text{17}\). Beyond this and occasional city-wide conferences for the TFI staff in Delhi (held quarterly\(^\text{18}\)), there was no observed formal interaction between the teachers at one school and the rest of the organization. Throughout my fieldwork, teachers appeared to be expected to come on their own to their classrooms every day on time, teach the required material, evaluate the students, run extracurricular activities, and fulfill the organization’s mission. However, I did not observe any regular checking of whether they perform all of these duties or not, other than occasional interaction with program managers.

TFI tries to put two teachers in each classroom (containing 40-80 students in all cases I observed\(^\text{19}\)). However, in some cases they are only able to put in one teacher, or if one of the two co-teachers leaves before their teaching fellowship is over, which was quite common in my

\(^{17}\) Learned in an informal interview with a TFI program manager on February 3, 2015. Also corroborated by two TFI teachers on November 2, 2017 and November 3, 2017 one Delhi TFI city-level administrator on November 5, 2017. The administrator also explained, regarding the frequency of meetings between teachers and their program managers, that program managers visit each school weekly in the initial months and then “settle down” to a frequency of once per month per teacher.

\(^{18}\) Verified by a Delhi TFI city-level administrator on November 5, 2017 and by a TFI teacher on November 2, 2017. I attended two of these conferences to observe on February 14, 2015 and December 13, 2015.

\(^{19}\) The class sizes in all TFI classrooms that I observed at TFI Schools A and B fall within this range.
fieldwork, TFI rarely replaces him or her. It was also frequently the case that a short-term volunteer was placed in a classroom and forced to teach the entire class on their own.

TFI operations at many schools included short-term volunteers. One example of the results of putting unsupervised volunteers into the classroom is from a classroom at TFI School A: Two college students with no teaching experience were forced to teach entire classes on their own while the TFI teachers worked on something else or were absent. As part of their college’s curriculum, these college students had to volunteer with TFI for a month and were assigned to this particular school. Even though they were untrained and likely only meant to participate in a supportive capacity, they were often the only adults in the classroom. At these times, the students would often get rowdy, unruly, and noisy. One of these volunteers, Kapil, was left in charge of the class for just 15 minutes. By the time five minutes had passed, I observed that nobody was listening to the math concept he was demonstrating on the board. Everyone was talking, drawing, arguing, laughing, or engaged in some other distraction. Kapil had no choice but to yell at the top of his lungs,

**HEY. HEY! LISTEN. SIT DOWN AND LISTEN!**

--Kapil, TFI volunteer, college student

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20 This occurred at both TFI Schools A and B during the first semester of the 2015-16 school year.
21 The TFI teachers who left mid-semester at TFI schools A and B were not replaced, leaving one TFI teacher to teach the classroom alone. In other, albeit undocumented, conversations with TFI personnel at conferences or visits to other schools, I also encountered numerous teachers who did not have a co-fellow.
22 Two untrained volunteers (meaning they had no training from TFI and were immediately put into the school environment) were regularly present at TFI School A for multiple weeks in December 2015 (and the example that follows in the main text is based upon these volunteers). One such volunteer was regularly present at TFI School B in late November and the first half of December 2015 for multiple weeks.
23 This observation took place on December 9, 2015.
24 Observed at TFI School A on December 9, 2015. Kapil was yelling in English.
This subdued the students for three minutes before the entire cycle repeated itself. The students did not become this disorderly, and not as often, with their regular TFI teachers. While chaos could also erupt in the presence of the regular TFI teachers, they could usually quickly calm the students down by loudly (but not yelling) saying “Everybody listen” or “Everyone sit down.” The volunteers were clearly uncomfortable, uncertain of what to do, and did not have the same control over the class.

Another example relating to the incorporation of volunteers into teaching comes from the activity of the regular TFI teachers. I followed two TFI teachers to a different room to observe them prepare an activity that the students would do later, while they left the other volunteer mentioned above, Rana, a timid young woman with a quiet voice, alone and in charge of an entire class. After about ten minutes, one of the TFI teachers said to the other,

“We should go back soon to the classroom, otherwise they’ll make her cry”
--One TFI teacher to another regarding the volunteer left alone in their classroom (translated from Hindi)\(^25\)

When we returned to the classroom, we found that Rana had indeed experienced trouble on her own during our time away and appeared to have been overwhelmed by the students, as the TFI teacher had predicted. The room was in complete chaos, with students shouting, playing, drawing, etc. Rana did not have the same personality that a volunteer like Kapil had and could not attempt to command the attention of the students by yelling. Clearly, volunteers should not be left alone with the entire class, but the TFI teachers, despite recognizing this fact, nevertheless did leave volunteers alone with the class.

\(^25\) Observed at TFI School A on December 9, 2015.
Such frequent personnel changes or shifts were very common at observed TFI schools. It was common for regular TFI teachers to instruct volunteers to lead class periods on their own. In TFI School A, described above, there was one seventh grade TFI classroom and one eighth grade TFI classroom. The two teachers for eighth grade were present but the ones for seventh grade were absent. So the two eighth grade TFI teachers, along with the two volunteers, had to manage both classrooms. This is what led to the incident described above, which when viewed narrowly seems like a misjudgment on the part of the teachers that stranded the volunteer. Instead, it is the result of a broader phenomenon within the organization. Such a situation could be mitigated by a reporting mechanism that tracks teacher attendance and makes sure that a qualified substitute comes to fill in.

Overwhelmingly, TFI teachers were not at all integrated into the rest of the schools in which they teach and felt uninvolved in these schools beyond their own classrooms. When asked about his relationship to the rest of the school and its teachers, Deepak, a TFI teacher at TFI School B, told me how he approached this at the start of the year and what led him to his then-current situation of having basically no contact with the rest of the school. He explained that at the start of the year, he and other teachers who were new at the school (some TFI, some government) would go to the teachers lounge when they had any free time, along with the experienced teachers. He explained that some of the young, new teachers from the government would at first seem very enthusiastic and eager to make improvements to some of the problems at the school and teach effectively. They would be quicker to return to their classrooms after a tea

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26 On multiple days in November and December 2015.
27 Something should also be said for the impact of frequent personnel changes on students, but beyond speculating that it is not recommended for their long-term development and learning outcomes, I cannot offer any concrete evidence one way or the other.
break, for example, whereas the experienced teachers linger for a long time in the lounge, not at all in a rush to get back to their classrooms\(^28\). But over the course of the first few days, Deepak could see the new government teachers falling into the habits of the experienced ones, as the experienced ones showed them that there was no rush to get back to the classroom and nothing to worry about. The TFI teachers, however, returned to their classrooms right away, he explained. As a result, he never became integrated with the rest of the teachers in any way\(^29\).

*Therefore, the new government teachers joined the pack while the new TFI teachers stayed separate.* TFI teachers also had to work constantly in or near their own classrooms in order to stay on top of everything that was required of them. I never observed a TFI teacher going to a teachers lounge to interact with other personnel or seeking out an interaction with any government personnel at the school other than the principal. The most venturing I ever observed was TFI teachers going to an empty room to have lunch with each other. But usually they remained in their own classroom during lunchtime, interacting or eating with their students or doing paperwork\(^30\).

In TFI School A, a TFI teacher, Sarjana, explained that the regular government teachers did not feel positively towards the TFI teachers and did not speak with them, make any effort to treat them pleasantly, or cultivate interaction. The principal at this school asked Sarjana and her co-teacher if they could teach more classes than just their own, wanting them to split up rather than continue to teach one classroom together. This would in turn ease some pressure on the staff.

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\(^28\) This phenomenon was observed many times across multiple government schools. Government teachers were universally late to the classroom. Such tardiness is addressed more in Chapter 5.

\(^29\) Learned during an informal interview with Deepak on February 6, 2015.

\(^30\) Students appeared to appreciate this and would often attempt to share their lunch food with the teachers, who would usually take a very small bite as a token of appreciation, but no more. This occurred regularly at both TFI Schools A and B.
of regular government teachers\textsuperscript{31}. I did not observe any instances of friendly relations between TFI and regular government staff or any efforts to cultivate them on the part of the government staff, with the exception of the interactions described below.

The only contact I observed between TFI and government school personnel in my entire time doing fieldwork was an occasional interaction to discuss a scheduling change between government school principals and TFI teachers. There is one exception: at TFI School B, a government teacher who rotates from class to class to teach Sanskrit did become friends with two TFI teachers. I observed him talking with the TFI teachers and then I briefly interviewed him. He spoke very highly of the TFI teachers and explained that he had learned a lot from them, especially noting that they had helped him improve his English. It is important to note that this particular teacher visits every classroom in the school to teach Sanskrit (the regular classroom teachers are not qualified to do this on their own, so a Sanskrit teacher visits each class once a week). Had the teacher not visited them as part of his duties, the TFI teachers would likely never have met him\textsuperscript{32}.

The TFI teachers appeared to function independently, not even having much interaction with any staff who clean the classrooms or the person who locks up the school at the end of the day. They came to school, went directly to their classroom, were with their students most of the time, and then left immediately when the school day ended\textsuperscript{33}. The one exception described above involved the Sanskrit teacher encountering TFI teachers during his regular rotations. The TFI

\textsuperscript{31} Learned during an informal interview on April 10, 2015.
\textsuperscript{32} I learned about and briefly interviewed the Sanskrit teacher during observation at TFI School B on September 29, 2015.
\textsuperscript{33} As does everyone else in the school, which was repeatedly observed to be completely empty within ten minutes of the school day ending at TFI Schools A and B.
teachers themselves have no mandate from above or observed impulse of their own to forge these relationships. As I observed TFI teachers at multiple schools and also interviewed them about their relations with the government personnel, this was the only single instance of friendly relations that emerged. The rest all reported a lack of relation building.

Most importantly, in TFI, these day-to-day occurrences at the school level were not monitored by the Program Managers or anyone else in the organization. TFI practiced a “loose” management structure in which the teachers operate largely on their own and they were not actively encouraged to change this behavior or asked about what happened each day or week in their school. If a volunteer was running class for a day, teachers were not interacting with anyone else in the school at all, or teachers were not even showing up to class, nobody higher up in the organization appeared to know about it. Furthermore, TFI teachers were “silenced” from one another, meaning that they had little interaction with the rest of the TFI organization beyond the few other TFI teachers at their own school.

Aspire

Aspire sent teams of two to four teachers daily to each government school in which they operated. The teachers came to school for the entire school day and afterwards went to the Aspire central office to do additional work or preparation and meet with program managers. As such, teachers who worked for Aspire in different schools still saw each other multiple times each week at the office. Every time I spoke with members of the management team for Aspire,

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34 This was observed to the the case throughout my fieldwork on Aspire. A senior administrator in Aspire also told me on October 3, 2015 that it was Aspire’s policy for its teachers to come into the office on most days after school.
they all knew what was going on in every one of their schools. They would tell me about recent events that had happened and then the teachers themselves, when I would visit the schools, would tell me the very same information about the same events, demonstrating that teachers and management were coordinated and in frequent contact. For example, program managers would know if classes had gone well in the last week and if particular students had made progress or not on their most recent work. They would also know the exact lessons their teachers were teaching in each classroom in each school. It appears that everyone in the organization is synchronized and aware of what is going on with the work of everyone else. This was especially evident at an all-staff weekend meeting that I observed35, during which all teachers gave reports in front of members of the entire organization (top administrative staff, program managers, and other teachers) about their recent progress and ongoing challenges.

Unlike the TFI teachers, Aspire teachers are required to be heavily integrated into the day to day workings of the school in which they work, beyond simply managing their own classrooms. They are required to meet frequently as needed with the principal and/or other relevant personnel at the school (such as the regular teachers of some of their students or the teachers of any classes they may be partially supporting) to discuss lesson planning and particular students. Also, in the words of one teacher at Aspire School A, Kritika, “We share children’s file[s] with respective class teachers [on a] monthly basis36.” These are two ways that interaction between NGO and government school teachers is encouraged and built into the Aspire program, taking away agency that the teachers might have to decide how much to communicate.

35 On October 10, 2015.
36 Written correspondence on December 7, 2016.
Aspire teachers also help plan events at the school and spend some of their free time (during the school day) with the other teachers. Of course, this varies from school to school. At Aspire School B, Aspire teachers were observed to spend more of their time with each other than with government school personnel; but at Aspire School A, Aspire teachers were often socializing with the some of the government teachers and staff during their breaks. At both Aspire Schools A and B, Aspire teachers were frequently observed going into the principal’s office to discuss the week’s plans or let him/her know of any changes. They were also observed to often interact with students that are not directly their own in the classroom (meaning students who are not part of the Aspire program but who attend the same government school), which was never observed with TFI teachers.

The overall baseline level of NGO-government personnel interaction is relatively high in Aspire schools. This high level of interaction is by design. I observed the Aspire management emphasizing over and over again to the teachers that cultivating and maintaining relations with the rest of the school is extremely important. The habit of management talking with Aspire teachers regularly and reminding them (the latter) to stay in tune with the rest of the school has clearly paid off and has allowed this particular organizational goal to be practiced in earnest instead of just being written down.

Aspire also made sure that its teachers show up to school regularly and that they were never understaffed. Teacher absences did not appear to be common and when they did happen they were due to drastic illness or another highly extenuating circumstance. Furthermore, Aspire

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37 I was told this repeatedly by the Aspire founder in an informal interview on January 11, 2015. I also observed administrative staff emphasizing this to Aspire teachers at an all-staff meeting on October 10, 2015.
management was aware of absences whereas this was not always the case for TFI\textsuperscript{38}. Even more importantly, when Aspire teachers were absent, the remaining teachers covered the workload easily and competently. Teacher absence was never observed to be a problem for Aspire. I was never asked to replace an absent Aspire teacher by doing their work, as both untrained volunteers and I often were with TFI\textsuperscript{39}. Aspire does not plug volunteers into classrooms to fill these gaps. Aspire management appeared to be aware of absences of Aspire teachers whereas TFA teachers did not appear to report their absences to a program manager or anyone else.

When TFI teachers gathered at lunch with the other TFI teacher(s) at their school, they rarely were doing work for school; they just ate and chatted. Aspire teachers were usually doing some kind of work for the organization or reviewing student work during break times (although

\textsuperscript{38} For example, one Aspire teacher was absent from Aspire School A for many days in October 2015 for personal reasons. The Aspire program managers and senior staff were aware of these absences and even mentioned to me beforehand that this teacher would not be in school. On December 10, 2015, at Aspire School B, towards the end of the school day, one of the teachers felt ill and decided to go directly home at the end of the school day (at the encouragement of two other Aspire teachers) rather than go to the office. Before leaving the school premises, I observed her sending a message to a program manager explaining the situation. She was then absent the next day due to the same illness and the other Aspire teachers were highly aware of this (the school principal, however, was not aware of this teacher’s absence and, when asked, told me that he usually finds out about absences of Aspire teachers later on and that it does not affect the program negatively). In the cases of both of these absent teachers, the other teachers at the school were able to easily adjust their plans so that the missing teacher did not cause any disruption to Aspire operations.

\textsuperscript{39} However, while Aspire teachers never asked me or anyone else to substitute for them, I was often asked by the government teachers at Aspire schools to cover their classrooms when one of their own staff was missing, which was very frequent. So in Aspire schools I taught English for one or two hours to a class at least once a week. In fact, Aspire teachers themselves are often asked to cover empty classrooms for which they are not supposed to be responsible. This is a universal complaint amongst Aspire teachers, which was voiced to me throughout my informal interactions with the Aspire staff and which I also observed lengthy discussions on during Aspire’s all-staff meeting on October 10, 2015.
they too partook in their fair share of time wasting, as described in Chapter 5)\textsuperscript{40}. TFI teachers were free to go home when the school day ended, whereas Aspire teachers went to the office to work more. On school holidays, Aspire teachers came into the office as well, whereas TFI teachers had the day off (just like the government teachers and students)\textsuperscript{41}. Both sets of teachers appeared to work hard but Aspire teachers’ work was more organized by Aspire itself whereas TFI teachers worked independently at home on any grading and preparation.

A noteworthy phenomenon at government schools was that as soon as the bell rings (if there is one) for the end of the day, the students and teachers left extremely quickly. A school groundskeeper or security guard came around to each classroom to lock the door, and he begins doing this the moment the school day ends. So there is pressure to exit the room quickly. Within ten minutes of the bell ringing, the school was empty and dead. Teachers also left right when the students did; they do not remain behind to do any pending work. All administrative or other non-teaching work was observed to happen during the school day. So TFI teachers were also pushed out and unable to stay to do anything additional. I observed this phenomenon daily at TFI schools A and B, Aspire Schools A and B, and numerous government schools in which I conducted one-time field visits. Aspire accounted for this problem by making their teachers come into the central office after school, but TFI teachers scattered, meaning there is much less teamwork and accountability.

\textsuperscript{40} These lunchtime behaviors of TFI and Aspire teachers were consistently observed throughout my fieldwork in the schools where each organization operated.

\textsuperscript{41} In addition to clearly observing this, an Aspire program manager explained to me on October 21, 2015 that Aspire teachers almost always must come into the office even when government school teachers and students have the day off.
Aspire practiced “tight management” of its teachers by monitoring their weekly activities, requiring them to gather at a central location after the school day is finished, and come into the office on school holidays. This is in contrast to TFI’s “loose management” of teachers. While TFI teachers were “siloed,” Aspire teachers were together and well coordinated.

*Simple Education Foundation*

As noted in earlier chapters, SEF was much earlier in its evolution when my fieldwork concluded in January 2016, having been founded in September 2014. As explained to me by a co-founder in an interview, SEF’s long-term goal is definitely to make change within the government school system, but they are first operating on a small scale to hone their model. They had, however, started a collaboration with the government school system in Kashmir, which was scheduled to begin in April 2016. As such, I was not able to observe any interactions between SEF and government personnel. All Delhi SEF students lived in the same neighborhood, Tughlakabad Extension, as the learning center itself and attended same nearby government school. SEF maintains good relations with the teachers of most of these students and is privy to the students’ test scores and other information about their school performance. But I did not have the chance to witness any interaction between the two parties myself.

With regards to organizational dynamics within SEF, due to its small size, there is not much need for any elaborate organizational structure or detailed coordination plan between managers and teachers. The organization is managed just by the two co-founders, one of whom also operates the Delhi learning center on his own as its only teacher. The other co-founder

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42 Interview with SEF co-founder and teacher at the SEF learning center on February 27, 2015.
planned to move to Kashmir to run operations for that project. The Delhi-based co-founder planned to work remotely for the Kashmir project, including doing some additional fundraising for items the government will not pay for, while also continuing operations in Delhi. The Kashmir project will of course need a management strategy for teachers, but in Delhi there is no such need. The co-founder/teacher who runs the Delhi center makes plans on his own, often along with the students, about what to do each week or month. He himself takes care of generating curriculum, keeping some data on student progress (with the help of laptops that the students use), communicating with parents, budgeting and finance for Delhi (including renting the space that houses the center, if needed), and handling other administrative needs as they arise.

Box 4.1 - Relationship of teachers to management and schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship of NGO teachers to NGO management</th>
<th>Relationship of NGO teachers to rest of school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TFI</strong></td>
<td>Loose: Program managers and teachers meet 1-4 times per month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspire</strong></td>
<td>Tight: Program managers and administrative staff interact on a regular basis with teachers to make plans and troubleshoot problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEF</strong></td>
<td>Very tight: Teachers are the management as well due to the small organization size.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the relationships of the teachers in each NGO to 1) the management within the organization itself and 2) the government personnel in the government schools where they work.
Comparing management structures and strategies

TFI’s program managers appear to have infrequent interaction with the teachers they supervise and TFI teachers are not required to come to centralized meeting places with each other on a regular basis. Therefore, TFI teachers are “loosely managed” and end up siloed and cut off from the rest of their own organization. Furthermore, TFI teachers are not required to integrate with the government personnel at their own schools, leaving them to work in a system that is parallel to but separate from the government school system.

Aspire’s program managers have daily or weekly interaction with Aspire teachers and frequently visit the individual schools themselves. Aspire teachers are required to come to the central office after school each day to work together with Aspire teachers from other schools, prepare together for upcoming teaching, and meet with managers. Due to these strict requirements, Aspire teachers are “tightly managed.” Aspire teachers are also required to integrate with the government schools in which they work and serve as a support to the school in any way possible.

Finally, SEF has so few staff members that it has little need for an administrative or management structure. It has two co-founders, one who taught every day in SEF’s Delhi-based learning center and the other who, at the time when my fieldwork ended, focused on SEF’s expansion into Kashmir. SEF’s formal operations were all separate from the work of the nearby government school that most SEF students attend. SEF just tries to maintain good relations with its students’ classroom teachers through occasional visits or communications.

These findings, summarized in Boxes 4.1-4.3, are consistent with other research on management within PPPs which indicates that effective leadership and management is critical to
the success of the partnership (Sagalyn 2007, Moorman 2001). I find that the chosen management structures of the NGOs has direct implications on the actions and capabilities of their teachers at school. These three different approaches yield unique school-level outcomes for each organization, its teachers, and its students. TFI operations are “loose” and less planned out than those in Aspire or SEF, sometimes resulting in situations in which untrained volunteers are forced to teach entire classes on their own, whereas Aspire operations are more “tight,” with teachers in each school having a plan for each week that less frequently leads to such tenuous situations (plus Aspire program managers are more aware of when a teacher will be absent and can take measures to fill gaps, whereas TFI program managers are less connected to the day-to-day operations at each school). SEF’s single teacher is rarely absent and if he is, an alternate plan is reliably arranged. Furthermore, when the bell rings to end the school day, TFI teachers leave immediately and go home, just like the students, whereas Aspire teachers go to the central office and keep working together.
Report Card. Teacher immersion in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL POLICY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel system</strong></td>
<td>Cautiously Integrated System</td>
<td>Separate System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFI functions as its own little school within a government school, with its own classrooms, teachers, and students who stay with TFI throughout their school careers. The job of the TFI teacher is to teach TFI students exclusively in a system that is separate and identical to the government system.</td>
<td>Aspire teachers must get to know the headmasters, other teachers, and parents at their schools. They are trained and required to support the school in any way necessary.</td>
<td>SEF operates through its own learning center, separate from the government school(s) that its students attend. Instead of creating a parallel school experience like TFI or an integrated support effort within school like Aspire, SEF supplements its students' government education with targeted review and special projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Integration or Spillover</strong></td>
<td>Involved Teachers; Evolving Roles</td>
<td>Unique Teaching and Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFI teachers do not integrate at all with the rest of their schools or interact with students in other classrooms. TFI and mainstream students are kept separate the entire day, except for during lunch and recess, if they choose. There is no potential for spillover of methods or sharing of ideas between TFI and government teachers. Being completely separate is not TFI's explicit goal, but it is what happens in practice, given the program's structure.</td>
<td>Aspire teachers become socially part of the school's operations and their roles evolve over time. Students see both regular government and Aspire teachers during the day. Aspire teachers give feedback and reports to each student's regular classroom teacher. As needed, Aspire teachers step in to aid regular teachers by providing worksheets, lesson plans, substitute teaching, specific attention to small groups of students, etc. When parents or teachers complain, Aspire modifies their work.</td>
<td>Students are given space to explore, do unique projects, and interact and produce work in teams. SEF cultivates in-depth, special relationships between educators and students, as well as among the students, that cannot happen in a school where there are more variables and chaos.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL-LEVEL OUTCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for opportunities to impact the rest of the school, though this may be outside of the TFI mission.</td>
<td>Make sure existing interaction with the rest of the school sustains and that the benefits of this are demonstrated to the officers at the district level. Make sure that spillover is occurring. Just because the teachers are integrated in the school does not mean that they are making a difference.</td>
<td>Look for opportunities to integrate these methods into the mainstream schooling of the students, at their government school itself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each NGO has a different strategy and policy regarding integration of their staff into the government schools in which they work or from where their students come. These policies and structural characteristics shape school-level outcomes that partly adhere to the policies and partly diverge. This chart shows how the policies with which teachers come to school change into what actually happens at school.
**Report Card: Management of Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL/POLICY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Meetings + As-Needed</td>
<td>TFI teachers are trained at a summer institute before their work begins. They are supervised by a Program Manager, who they are required to meet with once or twice per month. There are also TFI city-wide conferences every few months. There is no other required interaction with the organization for teachers beyond their own school.</td>
<td>Daily Office Visits</td>
<td>No Structure Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siloed Operations</td>
<td>TFI teachers rarely interact with other TFI personnel outside of their own school. In many cases, they are very rarely checked on by management. The group of TFI teachers at any one school is a siloed operation. TFI teachers do not convene on a regular basis outside of school and do not have any scheduled requirements apart from attending school. Management is often not aware of teacher absences.</td>
<td>Everyone is In-Sync</td>
<td>At the time of fieldwork, SEF just had two staff members of any kind, both of whom co-founded the organization and one of whom teaches every day at the learning center in Delhi. So SEF is not large enough to require a management strategy or structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL-LEVEL OUTCOME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unique Teaching and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIONS TO TAKE</td>
<td>Create additional management and team-building structures to increase connection between teachers and the rest of the organization.</td>
<td>In the ongoing and upcoming massive growth experienced by the organization, make sure this level of integration of staff into the rest of the organization is preserved.</td>
<td>As growth occurs, create management mechanisms with open channels of communication between staff and upper management, taking examples from other organizations that do this successfully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each NGO has different management strategies for supervising its teachers. This Report Card shows the consequences of these management strategies for the personnel at each organization.
Curricular plans and classroom dynamics

This section examines each NGO’s curriculum, meaning the content they teach their students and how they choose to deliver it, as well as selected dynamics within the classroom environment while that curriculum is delivered. It also addresses how the NGOs respond to needs of students (or the school as a whole) and classroom dynamics that relate to the teaching itself.

Teach for India

TFI’s curricular plan is to teach the very same NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) curriculum that all Delhi government schools use, but simply to teach it more effectively. In other words, TFI does not aim to change curriculum at all. It simply supplies its own teacher to do what the government teachers are already supposed to do. TFI teachers are responsible for teaching math, science, social science (known as social studies in the USA), Hindi, and English to their students. Sanskrit is taught by a dedicated Sanskrit teacher who teaches it to all of the students in the school (both regular government and TFI students). I only studied TFI classrooms with teachers in grades 1-8, but older students also learn other subjects in some cases, such as accounting, business studies, psychology, and political science, in which case the TFI teachers are also responsible for teaching some of these. TFI teachers are the primary classroom teachers of their students.

One consequence of the TFI model of plugging new teachers into the regular government system without many other changes is that they still have to deal with many of the problems that
regular government classrooms encounter, such as constant interruptions in their classroom from other students and teachers. This phenomenon is explored more in Chapter 5.

Another problem of regular government school classrooms that TFI teachers face is what I call the “syllabus problem”: A very common problem in government schools in Delhi is that teachers have to rush to finish the syllabus (curriculum) prescribed by the government for a single semester rather than taking the necessary time to teach the material thoroughly and ensure that the students have learned how to apply it or retained it. If they slow down to teach something fully, they would not be able to get through all of the material. I encountered this phenomenon every week in both TFI and government classrooms, where students who have supposedly been learning English for years are not able to speak a single sentence of English in practice. For example, while observing in a regular (mainstream) government classroom in Aspire School A, I asked the teacher about her students’ English learning. Even though hers was an English medium class, her students did not have basic command of the language. I observed that they could read English letters and short words, but could not make written or spoken English sentences on their own. Their notebooks appeared to contain verbatim copies of English sentences from their textbooks. I asked why the teacher does not review basic sentence structure and verbs with the students. She aggressively replied that she had already taught those skills to

43 Government schools in Delhi mostly teach in Hindi, but also have some classrooms designated as “English medium.” The example presented here is one in which even English medium students are not proficient in written or conversational English. An English medium classroom is one in which all of the instruction for all subjects is supposed to be in English, but in practice it is not. Teachers in English medium classrooms I observed across all schools talk and teach to their students exclusively in Hindi. Only the written work is in English, much of which is observed to be copied from textbooks into student notebooks. Note that Teach for India classrooms are all meant to be English medium.
the students years ago, that they already knew them, and that they are ready to learn more advanced material.

This teacher behaved as if having taught it one time three years ago meant that they knew it now. She did not acknowledge that the students were behind. To her, learning and teaching meant the procedure of showing something to the students, even if they do not remember it and cannot use it in practice. This is the crux of “the syllabus problem”: teachers must complete what is in the curriculum on a certain schedule, according to the rules, regardless of whether learning occurred or not. A concomitant problem, also demonstrated in this example, is that the teachers believe that and behave as if the students have truly learned material that was covered, even when there was never enough time to reinforce this material with the students.

It appears that students are taught their first lesson of English (in first grade, for example) very quickly and in Hindi (rather than in English), do not understand or retain it, and then move on to the next lesson. They never end up learning much or any of the English language. In a subject like Hindi (which they are speaking natively already) or science (which is not always cumulative, meaning that learning next week’s lesson successfully does not necessarily depend on learning this week’s successfully), this appears not to be as problematic. But for English and math it is a bigger problem. These students have supposedly been sitting through 30-60 minutes of English class per day for years and still do not show any evidence of knowing basic aspects of the language. Since text in English is present and noticeable in their notebooks, they evidently copy into their notebooks whatever the teacher tells them to write. This phenomenon, of teachers rushing through material because they did not have more time, was highly evident at all schools.

44 This interaction occurred in Aspire School A on November 19, 2015.
included in my fieldwork. Furthermore, both TFI and government teachers complained regularly
about having to “complete the syllabus,” as they put it, in time because it is the rule. A
difference between TFI and government teachers is that TFI teachers acknowledge that some
students never solidified important foundational skills in math and English, while government
teachers do not acknowledge this.

TFI teachers also have the syllabus problem, even though they recognize the need for
building fundamental skills. They did appear to try harder, spend more time, and have more
skills than most government school teachers but they still had to follow this rule. And they
complained to me about having to make huge compromises, often having to eschew what they
know to be the ideal practices, in order to adhere to the rules and “complete the syllabus.”

On multiple occasions, I was able to observe TFI teachers at TFI Schools A and B while
they did marking (grading) for end-of-semester standardized tests. In Delhi government
schools, the teachers themselves do the grading for their own students on most standardized tests.

A few standardized tests in high school, which count heavily for college admission and labor

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45 This was raised as a problem by a TFI city-level senior Delhi administrator in an interview on
September 27, 2015. It was also raised by TFI teachers on October 5, 2017, December 17, 2015,
and December 14, 2015; an Aspire teacher on November 30, 2015; and government teachers on
November 20, 2015 and December 10, 2015 (in addition to being alluded to by the government
teacher in the example above on November 19, 2015). It was also observed to be a problem
throughout my fieldwork.

46 This difference also demonstrates the culture of learning in government schools and how it
differs from how the NGOs approach learning, the main topic Chapter 5. Government teachers
and students appear to consider knowledge to be adequately learned if it has been written down
in the students’ notebooks at some point. There is no visible culture of review and no apparent
reinforcement and no notion that different students learn at different speeds.

47 Raised as a problem by a TFI city-level senior Delhi administrator in an interview on
September 27, 2015 and by TFI teachers on October 5, 2015, December 17, 2015, and December
14, 2015.

48 At TFI School A on October 1, 2, 5, and 9, 2015. I also observed TFI School B teachers
grading outside of school on multiple undocumented occasions.
market prospects, are (supposed to be) proctored and graded by a third party. But middle-school level tests and below are just meant for practice and are graded by the regular teachers. Furthermore, the results of these exams are not trustworthy, which is why this dissertation only draws conclusions about learning outcomes via observation of classroom practices. One teacher at TFI School B described exams to me as “A cheating carnival”\(^{49}\). I too observed in multiple schools either exams or situations in which students were instructed to sit quietly on their own and do their own work. In all cases, they constantly shared answers, even getting up and running over to other students’ desks to obtain answers when the teacher is not looking.

Furthermore, teachers at TFI schools A and B both reported that they had been instructed by their principals to give each student an overall grade of at least 75% or more. Therefore, the teachers I observed during their grading were extremely lenient, looking for opportunities to award points whenever possible. In reality, very few of the students scored above 50% on any of the exams and many scored around 25%\(^{50}\). In all subjects, but especially in math, it was clear that more time is needed on fundamentals before students can do anything more advanced. Most mistakes in the math exams were simple arithmetic errors, followed by a lack of understanding of how to complete the problem. Note that all of the grading I observed was for students in grades 6-8, by which time students are meant to be learning advanced geometry and algebra, according to the government syllabus (curriculum). However, most of the students were not able to recognize how to set up problems, let alone solve them by then doing correct arithmetic. \(A\)

\(^{49}\) On September 29, 2015. This teacher also explained that cheating is rampant despite the alternate seating arrangement put in place during exams that is meant to curtail cheating.\(^{50}\) These numbers refer to the percentage of questions that I observed that students answered correctly, not to their final scores, which were inflated.
root cause of this entire syndrome of problems appears to be that teachers are forced to go too fast.

Another cause is that teachers are not given enough support in TFI from their superiors or from the teaching materials. For example, during observation in a 7th TFI grade classroom in TFI School A, the students were learning about the order of operations. They had to learn how to solve problems such as this (and then more complicated ones involving parentheses and exponents):

\[ 4 + \frac{10}{2 \times 3} - 8 = ? \]

In order to solve this correctly, one must first solve the \( \frac{10}{2 \times 3} \) part in the middle, which equals 15, making the rewritten problem \( 4 + 15 - 8 \), which equals 11. However, students were taught to solve expressions in this order: parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction (instead of the correct version which is parentheses, exponents, multiplication OR division left to right, addition OR subtraction left to right). As a result, instead of following the correct progression to get 11 as the answer, students would do multiplication before division even if the division came first. They would first multiply 2 and 3, leading to \( 4 + \frac{10}{6} - 8 \). Only then would they do division, leading to \( 4 + 1.666 - 8 \). And finally addition and subtraction would produce an incorrect answer of -2.333. The students did not know that they had to do the division first if it came before the multiplication, and their teacher never noticed the problem.

The teacher was teaching without a solutions manual and put the wrong answer to problems up on the board multiple times. TFI should warn teachers of potential problems like these either by providing supplemental solutions manuals and teaching manuals beyond the

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51 On October 17, 2015.
standard government ones or by having program managers and teachers prepare more before they teach in order to avoid consequences such as these. As it stands now, there are no support structures in place to combat such instructional problems\textsuperscript{52}. The example provided above is consistent with all of my observations of math education at TFI schools A and B. Students used incorrect approaches to solving math problems on a regular basis. Teachers did not have the time to look through each student’s notebook and correct any errors.

\textit{Aspire}

Aspire has the primary purpose of doing remedial education in separate classrooms with its own separate curriculum, administered to students who are behind the level of the others in their class. Aspire teachers come to schools with the mission of helping the weakest students and becoming immersed in the school environment. Through numerous talks with top administrators, observing a very thorough all-day all-staff meeting, interviewing teachers, and many hours of observation in schools, I find that Aspire cares very strongly about this immersion. The founder of Aspire told me that the number one goal is for Aspire to support the government school in any way possible\textsuperscript{53}. Their typical strategy is to take over an empty classroom in the school\textsuperscript{54} and hold remedial classes in Hindi and math for students who are most in need of it. In addition to this, as

\textsuperscript{52} In this particular classroom, some students (15 to 20 out of about 60) in that classroom were trying hard to follow the procedure taught to them. But it was taught incorrectly. And the teacher was never briefed on how to teach this potentially-complicated concept. So there is no point in teaching complicated algebra and geometry to these students before they can solve these simple problems. Only once teachers are allowed to slow down will we see gains from the time that is currently put in. And only after that would students ever have a chance of solving such problems correctly and having the insight that multiplication and division are actually the same operation.

\textsuperscript{53} On January 11, 2015.

\textsuperscript{54} Or rotate from room to room if needed, but such that the Aspire teacher is in charge of that classroom for the time that he/she is with those students.
shown in the previous section, Aspire teachers are made to initiate meetings and interactions with the headmaster and other teachers at the school on a regular basis (and report on the status of these relations regularly to supervisors) and support the school in any other way possible. Teachers also frequently attend School Management Committee (SMC) meetings, which are monthly meetings mandated by the 2009 Right To Education Act for parents and teachers to discuss the management of the school. Each government school is supposed to have its own SMC.

*These activities are part of the requirements for each Aspire teacher and they are seen as critical to the success of the Aspire intervention.* Aspire even has special staff members dedicated to community relations. Even though all of these methods are not always effective (for example, government teachers are often not receptive when Aspire teachers approach them), Aspire teachers are still required to make an attempt. Whereas TFI teachers are checked on much less frequently and and less strictly, Aspire teachers have to meet regularly with a program manager and also go into the Aspire main office after the school day is over to work on plans (frequently, preparation of what they call TLMs, teaching learning materials) or have meetings.

TFI teachers are rarely called in to any centralized meeting. When they are, it is in the form of a TFI City Conference in which TFI teachers attend lecture or seminar sessions, often run by third party experts, and participate to whatever extent they see fit. They are not actively engaged in a discussion about their own individual teaching work and progress the way Aspire teachers are. Aspire’s high level of interaction amongst teachers and staff appears to be critical to their understanding and development of curriculum. TFI leaders may see curriculum

55 Ascertained but undocumented during my fieldwork in fall 2015 and confirmed by an Aspire teacher on June 25, 2017.
development and workshopping as less necessary because the NCERT has already done any development that is necessary for the government school curriculum. In other words, much more flexibility is evident in the Aspire model than in the TFI model, because the former meets and adapts regularly to the learning speed of the students at each school while the latter simply follows the syllabus.

In addition to making sure its teachers are highly immersed in the school, Aspire approaches its classroom work with the students very carefully. The most important aspects of this are going at whatever speed is required to learn content fully and keeping very good student progress records\(^56\). This philosophy is present throughout the organization, from the founder who mentions the records and their value on a regular basis, to the individual teachers who always say “I have the records to show you” and “we keep track of everything” when questions or discussion related to student achievement come up\(^57\). Aspire has a record (a folder kept in the school) on each of its students, which includes work the student has done (everything from worksheets and assignments to drawings), assessments written by the teachers, and reports of the student’s progress in Hindi and math. One can open a student’s record and see examples of their math problem solving, reading and writing ability, etc. Teachers have gone through and made notes and it is clear that all student work is reviewed and assessed and used to plan what to do next.

During my fieldwork, I closely examined both student records and the learning materials used by Aspire, alongside teachers at Aspire Schools A, B, and C as well as with program

\(^56\) I observed these records themselves and observed Aspire teachers reviewing or adding to these records on a regular basis between September 2015 and January 2016. This process is a regular part of Aspire’s everyday functioning.

\(^57\) Told to me on October 13, 2015; translated from Hindi.
managers at Aspire’s main office (where the records are sometimes brought for review). The detail kept on each student is extremely thorough. There is a rubric of skills that each student works through. They can only move on to learning and practicing the next skill when they have mastered the present one. Records of this progress are kept carefully and regularly reviewed to make sure students have a good foundation in each skill. While TFI teachers may give much better verbal feedback to their students compared to government school teachers, they still do not keep track of individual students throughout the semester the way Aspire does. Aspire’s curriculum is flexible whereas TFI’s curriculum is rigid. But Aspire practices constant, rigid tracking of student progress whereas there was no visible day to day tracking of student progress conducted by TFI teachers (only end-of-semester exams).

Aspire appears to treat each school as a separate project and works to create a unique and personalized environment for its students. For example, the Aspire classrooms in most of its schools are equipped and decorated to make it fun and productive (in some cases they may have just recently begun work in a school and have not yet decorated the classroom). In many cases, Aspire’s entire staff of teachers is required to come to a particular school to paint the walls, put up posters, and make reference materials that go on the wall. I observed such a session at Aspire School A when approximately 20 Aspire teachers all came on a weekend to help decorate one

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58 I had the chance to observe multiple sessions during which Aspire teachers and senior administrators went through student records together. As teachers looked at student records one by one, reviewing written work of each student, and making notes, administrators hovered and mentored them in how to perfect this process. For example, I observed an administrator say to a teacher: “Look at the way this student writes his 耳. He writes it incorrectly. You need to mark that down in the record and keep an eye on it in school” (translated from Hindi). Such comments to coach the teachers were common in these sessions. 耳 is the hindi character that makes an H sound. This specific observation took place in January of 2014. I observed similar interactions multiple times throughout my fieldwork with Aspire.
classroom. The desks in Aspire classrooms are often arranged in clusters of five or six or a semicircle around the blackboard.

Aspire curriculum involves a combination of interactive lecturing, group-work, and individual work. 10 to 20 students, who are measured to be at the same ability level, will be together with one teacher in the classroom at a time. Lectures are usually short and meant to prepare the students to do a particular activity. For example, the teacher will review a math problem-solving procedure on the board and then hand out a worksheet for the students to complete, sometimes in groups and sometimes on their own. Students receive feedback on what they have done either during that session or soon thereafter. It is often appears that these students are trying to solve the problems in earnest. By contrast, students in most government school classrooms (and some TFI ones too) just write down the completed math problems in their notebooks (regardless of whether they solved it themselves, copied it, or if the answer is even right) and nobody will ever look to check. This problem, in which there is no continuity or follow-up, is minimized by Aspire curriculum due to their strict tracking procedures that accompany it, whereas TFI teachers do not have the time and capability to combat this problem, given the constraints described in the previous section.

Simple Education Foundation

The pedagogy and curriculum used at SEF is project-based and is different from that of TFI and Aspire. TFI takes the mainstream curriculum and mainstream approach to implementing it as well as possible, attempting to follow the same guidelines prescribed to government

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59 On October 21, 2015.
teachers but deliver at a higher level. Aspire uses its own curriculum and takes a thorough and methodical approach to implementing it. SEF uses curriculum that changes as needed and is based on what is most appropriate for students to be learning at any given point in time. Its Delhi-based co-founder and teacher, who singlehandedly runs the Delhi center, explained in an interview that his goal is for the students to be learning without realizing that they are learning. He tries to use as innovative strategies as possible to accomplish this. In spring and summer 2015, he focused on helping students reinforce skills needed in school by giving students fun activities and exercises to work on. For example, he had his students write narrative stories and do other types of creative writing to improve their English reading and writing. There is no apparent opportunity for creative writing in the government system. But this activity at SEF served to help the students improve the skills needed to do well within the government system.

SEF uses complementary pedagogy, which has no overlap with the formal curriculum or learning style of government schools but helps students achieve positive outcomes at school while also building a completely separate set of life skills. Before September 2015, students would come to the learning center and work on small assignments, as described above, and also review and help each other with their regular schoolwork. It was typical for students at the center (just one room) to be arranged in two groups: one group in a circle with the teacher, reviewing material from their government school textbooks and another group on its own, working on small assignments quietly.

Starting in September 2015, SEF transitioned to doing projects with its students that last one or two months each. In September 2015, students studied water in their community,

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60 On February 27, 2015.
including water shortages, water wasting, other water habits, water hygiene, etc. They began by doing a “literature review” of a few articles about water, selected by the teacher. They then went out into the neighborhood and took surveys about community members’ water usage habits and accessibility. They eventually compiled all of their data and presented their findings to each other in presentations. This and all future projects were conducted in teams of four or five, each team having a name and a laptop to use for reading and searching, writing down notes and reports, and creating a presentation to give at the end of the month or unit (as described in Chapter 3). On many days, even in the middle of a project, the teacher would have the students give short presentations to each other about their progress so far. It was very common to see members of teams practice speaking their presentations aloud to each other, sitting on the floor in a pair and taking turns giving a semi-scripted monologue. In general, even within teams, students at SEF are engaged in their work almost constantly. They each have divided up the work they need to do within their team and are dedicated to the point that they can work independently without supervision. In fact, their teacher often was able to do his own work on his computer while the students did their work on their computers and notebooks.

In October and November 2015, the SEF students studied crime against women. They again had to follow the same procedure. They started off in October by reading articles about a huge variety of crimes in India including eve teasing\(^{61}\), rape, beating, torture, etc. It was very common in the middle of October to hear a student say aloud to his/her teammates, “what is sex?” or “what is rape?”\(^{62}\) The teacher made students look everything up on their own rather than telling them directly, and this topic was no exception to that rule. It took the students a long time

\(^{61}\) Verbal harassment.

\(^{62}\) Both observed on October 6 and 8, 2015.
to disentangle everything in the articles they had to read, but the teacher did not rush anything. Rather, he extended the project from one month to two months (it was initially meant to be completed in October itself). Eventually they understood everything.

In mid-November, the students finished surveying women in their community and received a huge variety of responses. They then input data from the paper surveys into spreadsheets and then prepared charts and presentations like they did in September. SEF students are not only practicing reading, writing, computers, and statistics at a very high level for their age but are also confronting very important social issues. The pedagogy involved is clearly quite different from those of TFI and Aspire in both its flexibility to change at the last minute (or extend schedules as needed) and in terms of the content encountered by students. After the end of each project, the teacher sometimes chooses the next project on his own and sometimes has the students choose together via discussion and voting\textsuperscript{63}.

In December 2015 they began a unit on computer programming with the goal of each team learning basic skills through tutorials such as those at code.org and then making a game or other simple software. The students spent most of their initial time doing tutorials in groups, each taking turns controlling the computer with the others watching silently, to make sure that each student knows what to do without help from the others. The teacher would go from group to group.

\textsuperscript{63} I was never present at SEF on one of the days when a new project was chosen in this fashion, but the teacher told me about it during other observational visits. The observations described in this subsection about SEF happened repeatedly throughout my numerous visits to the SEF learning center in fall 2015.
group as needed to socratically\textsuperscript{64} give hints, being careful not to directly reveal the answer to a question, forcing the students to think for themselves and figure it out on their own.

\textit{Comparing curricular plans and classroom dynamics across cases}

TFI uses the exact same curriculum that all Delhi government schools use, with the goal of delivering it at a higher quality level with their own, separately-trained teachers. On one hand, TFI teachers must deliver the curriculum at the pace that the government mandates, leading to the \textit{“syllabus problem”} that teachers are constrained by the requirement to complete all of the material within one semester. But it appears that all students are not able to learn and retain at that fast speed. Aspire, on the other hand, focuses just on math and Hindi and has its own curriculum in which students complete learning rubrics at their own speed, allowing teachers to work directly with them to make sure they make progress. SEF provides curriculum that is \textit{complementary} to government school curriculum by having students work on skills that will make them more well-rounded when added to regular government curriculum.

In the case of curriculum in these three organizations, TFI’s policy of using the government curriculum without any modifications hinders their ability to provide a more successful learning environment for their students (compared to the average government classroom). By contrast, Aspire and SEF have the flexibility to vary the speed at which curriculum is delivered to best suit student needs.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{64} The teacher would only respond to questions from students by asking other questions rather than giving students the answer to their question. This helped steer them closer to the correct answer while also forcing them to think and problem-solve on their own.}
## Report Card: Curriculum delivery and the syllabus problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Policy Characteristics</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Curriculum and Schedule</strong></td>
<td>Fixed Curriculum, Flexible Schedule</td>
<td>Flexible Curriculum and Schedule</td>
<td>SEF chooses and changes its curriculum on a monthly basis, sometimes changing it at the last moment. The basic model of students working on projects in teams (with occasional days to learn something specific interspersed) stays the same, but the teacher can change the content up until the last minute. The time taken to complete each project can also vary or be extended as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus Problem</td>
<td>Student-Specific Curriculum</td>
<td>In-Depth Learning and Immersion</td>
<td>SEF students get to spend lots of quality time exploring individual topics. They can ask questions, look up materials online, and go into their community to learn more about issues like domestic violence, water security, etc. They also get to meet with visiting educators and researchers for additional mentorship and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Level Outcome</td>
<td>Change policy to allow for deviations from the syllabus and/or put supplemental remedial support in place for students at risk of falling behind.</td>
<td>Find ways that regular government teachers can implement these same methods despite having an often larger student to teacher ratio and rules about how fast they have to teach. Current program is too human capital intensive.</td>
<td>Find ways to integrate SEF curriculum with government curriculum more so that more students can benefit from SEF methods while learning necessary material in tandem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Report Card shows how each organization’s overall curriculum plans impact the work of teachers and student learning. There is a clear depth-for-breadth tradeoff: TFI is able to cover more ground in their material but they cannot slow down to reinforce any of it, so only the most precocious students will learn it all, leaving the rest behind. SEF students learn the most in-depth and also build other skills in the process (teamwork, research, etc) but encounter much fewer topics.
## Report Card: Specific Curricular Aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL/POLICY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All instruction is in English.</td>
<td>1. All instruction in Hindi.</td>
<td>1. All instruction in English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All material, including cumulative subjects, are taught at grade level (sixth graders are taught sixth grade math).</td>
<td>2. Students are taught according to their own learning level and pace.</td>
<td>2. Students are taught in teams via one or two-month-long units on a specific project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students learn via government textbooks, notebooks, lectures, and the blackboard.</td>
<td>3. Students learn via short lectures, activities, and worksheets prepared weekly by Aspire teachers.</td>
<td>3. Students learn via periodic coaching and guiding announcements from their teacher. The teacher often refuses to answer questions if students can look up or figure out the answer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SCHOOL-LEVEL OUTCOME

1. Teachers teach lessons mostly in English with some Hindi, but in informal interactions mix both languages. Many of the students learn some or a lot of English while others do not. Most students can read/write English and Hindi characters.

2. Students who did not master earlier material are left behind when new material is presented (the Syllabus Problem). Students are often sitting idle at their benches.

3. Students and teachers are limited in the resources that are physically in the classroom. There are no solution manuals. Teachers do use their phones to look up information if needed.

### ACTIONS TO TAKE

**CURTAIL SYLLABUS PROBLEM BY INCLUDING REMEDIAL ENGLISH AND MATH.**

**FIND WAYS TO INTEGRATE THE WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES INTO REGULAR GOVERNMENT CLASSROOMS WITHOUT VIOLATING THE SYLLABUS PROBLEM (MEANING, IN PRACTICE, WITHOUT SLOWING DOWN THE FASTER LEARNING STUDENTS).**

**LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO INTEGRATE THESE METHODS INTO THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING OF THE STUDENTS, AT THEIR GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ITSELF.**

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This Report Card addresses selected specific aspects the NGOs' curriculum to look closely at its consequences for students. *In this context, a cumulative subject is one in which learning new material successfully depends on having mastered previous material. Math and languages are examples of cumulative subjects. A student cannot do algebra effectively if they cannot do arithmetic.* **Students in Aspire classrooms run exclusively by Aspire teachers are not idle. Students in the combined classrooms run by both Aspire and government teachers at the Sheikh Sani school are often idle, as Chapter 5 discusses.**
Extracurricular Activities

This section discusses the extracurricular activities that each organization organizes, beyond their regular interventions in government school classrooms. The structures of the activities follow very closely from the structure of the organizations as a whole.

Teach for India

TFI has its own set of extracurricular activities meant only for its own students. Some of them are initiatives of current or former TFI teachers. A good example of this is a program, which is now its own NGO, called Khel Khel Mein. This is a sports league for students in TFI classrooms across Delhi in which they participate in sports such as football (soccer), kho kho, and track and field. The organization also sends coaches to TFI schools for students to have after-school practice. In addition to sports, there are TFI-only extracurriculars for academics and arts. I had the chance to observe multiple of these events where TFI students and teachers from across the city gather for the day.

For example, on one Sunday (typically the only day off in a regular school week), Ankur, a TFI teacher from TFI School B, and 15 of his sixth-grade students participated in multiple academic competitions at a venue in the middle of the city that had been reserved for the day by TFI. I accompanied them to observe. I met Ankur and his students in front of their school in the morning. We then took the metro train together to the central venue. Many other

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65 I observed a soccer practice at TFI School A on October 5, 2015.
66 April 5, 2017.
TFI teachers had also brought their students to the event so that the students could compete for a few hours against one another.

The students participated in a variety of academic events such as team-based math, history, and science competitions; expository speaking; and writing. Many of Ankur’s students were in a math competition together, so I observed in the room where this was taking place for most of the time. There were two or three rounds during which students would collaboratively take a short math quiz. After each round, only some of the teams advanced, so the rest had to sit quietly or go to another room. In general, it was well-organized, but there was no plan for how to spend free time, meaning that students whose competitions finished early or who were eliminated early from their competitions were confined to classrooms with nothing specific to do.

Students were given lunch in the middle of the day, consumed from individual trays in large cardboard boxes to the competition rooms. Students ate in the rooms in which they already happened to be located in when lunch time arrived. The entire day and competition had a very westernized feel to it. It appeared to be an (successful) attempt to take an educational activity that may be common worldwide and execute it the way the American or British school systems would, with stricter organization, coaching of the students beforehand, supervision of students at all times, and having students advance or fail to advance to multiple rounds of a competition. To be clear, this event was meant only for government students from across the city who were part of the TFI program, meaning they had a TFI classroom teacher. Students in government schools in TFI classrooms could come to this event but their friends in neighboring classrooms in the same schools who had regular government teachers could not participate. TFI organizes these
extracurricular activities separately, just for their own students. I also observed a similar full-day TFI extracurricular event attended by students of TFI School A\(^67\) in which they participated in arts, theater, and singing. Both events were structured very similarly and served the same purpose of providing enrichment for TFI students across the city.

**Aspire**

Aspire’s extracurricular activities are much less developed than TFI’s, likely because they are much smaller and because they appear to value the whole school as a unit. Aspire’s model for extracurriculars is to put a lot of effort into just one or two large events per school each year. The event that I observed at Aspire School A is the Children’s Festival\(^68\). This event lasted for the entire school day and was organized and executed entirely by Aspire for the benefit of all students at the school and their families. The government teachers were also in attendance, but all of the resources and person-power come from Aspire. The event consisted of games, music, food, and activities. Architecturally, the government schools in which Aspire operated feature large courtyards in the center surrounded by three or four sides of connected buildings, sometimes up to four floors tall but often lower. For the Children’s Festival, a sound system, streamers, and other decorations were set up in the central courtyard where music played for most of the day.

In nearby, small, open areas (for example, a small grass or dirt ground adjacent to the school building), children could play games. Throughout the rest of the school were craft activities such as pottery (including an expert who came in with a spinning pottery wheel) and

\(^{67}\) On April 19, 2015.  
\(^{68}\) On December 5, 2015.
recreation such as watching short videos that were projected onto the wall in one classroom. Lunch was served for both students and their family members. The festival ended with a dance party in the courtyard with teachers and students dancing together. Aspire teachers and other staff had to bring all of the equipment for the event from and back to their central office. All of this equipment then went on to the next Aspire school that has a Children’s Festival. On Children’s Festival days, all Aspire teachers and most staff were required to go to the school where the festival was being held, rather than to the school in which they usually work.

At the Children’s Festivals, students enjoyed dancing with the Aspire teachers in the central courtyard for hours. Hit dance songs played and students especially loved two of them, which the teachers eventually ended up playing repeatedly on loop. Aspire had fashioned paper hats, enough for everyone in attendance, including parents and teachers, to wear throughout the day. One Aspire staff member, Ranjay, who conducts community relations work for the organization and is also heavily involved in planning the Children’s Festivals due to his background in drama, explained to me the importance of the hats, to show that everyone is part of the same community and that everyone can come together and enjoy.

Ranjay put on a puppet show for the students in the central courtyard using a small puppet theater that had been brought in. At the Festival I observed, the founder of the organization came to the school approximately two-thirds of the way through, along with a potential donor to the organization to show him some of Aspire’s work and introduce him to others on the staff. The Festival was also a good opportunity for the Aspire staff to interact with the parents. I too interacted with multiple parents who all told me that they enjoyed the Festival and were happy that Aspire is part of their school.
These Children’s Festivals are part of Aspire’s comprehensive approach to working with a school. Even though Aspire teachers may only be working directly in the classroom with one-third of the students at a school, they still put on the Festival for everyone there. The Aspire founder told me in an interview that the most important thing that his and other NGOs can do is “be there” for the schools in whatever way possible, provide whatever type of support the school might want, and show that they are partners. The Children’s Festival clearly fits with these implementation goals: everyone at the school is included and has fun. Aspire provides all the planning and resources but the event is still considered to be a partnership in every sense.

Simple Education Foundation

All of SEF itself is extracurricular since all of its students are already attending a government school and their involvement with SEF would count as supplemental education. Beyond its usual activities, SEF does not appear to have any additional activities that the students do outside of the learning center or that is different from what is described earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, SEF’s approach to school blurs the traditional boundaries between formal curriculum and extracurricular activity. The goal of SEF’s co-founder, that students should learn without realizing that they are learning, is once again applicable here.

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69 In an interview on January 11, 2015.
70 Except for taking surveys within their community, which is very much a part of SEF’s curriculum and not “extracurricular.
Comparing extracurricular activities across cases

TFI has an extensive portfolio of extracurricular activities that are available to its students (and not other government students) city-wide, including sports, drama, singing, academic competitions, and potentially more. These activities are carefully planned, are completely separate from extracurricular activities in the government system, and add enrichment to the program for TFI students. Aspire, however, holds an extracurricular activity for all of the students, parents, and teachers at the government schools in which it works, regardless of their typical relationship to Aspire. Aspire holds a Children’s Festival, a fun day for students to play games and dance while parents and teachers can talk, in every school in which it works. This event is meant to bring together everyone at the school and show that Aspire cares about it as a whole. SEF has no extracurriculars beyond its regular curriculum, which in a sense already is extracurricular.
## Report Card: Extracurricular and Enrichment Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL/POLICY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many Activities for TFI Students</td>
<td>Children's Festival</td>
<td>The only extracurricular activity organized by Aspire is a Children's Festival, held once per year in each school where they work. All Aspire teachers and most of the management staff (in the whole city) help run the Children's Festival at each school, organizing a variety of activities spanning art, dance, games, and eating for both students and parents to enjoy.</td>
<td>No Additional Enrichment. SEF is already entirely extracurricular, but does not feature the enrichment activities that extracurriculars often involve such as music, dancing, sports, competitions, etc. The students are, of course, able to participate in these at their government schools if/when they are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-Wide Integration for TFI Students</td>
<td>Improved Community Building</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFI students who participate in extracurriculars get to be a part of enriching events with other students beyond their own schools and neighborhoods.</td>
<td>The Children's Festival is not only fun, but further helps Aspire build a relationship with students and parents, showing that they are truly committed to improving the entire school. It is also a good time for Aspire to show off their work to interested third parties such as donors or researchers.</td>
<td>There is no real upside, downside, or other consequence to SEF's lack of additional enrichment activities. Its regular programming, despite covering academic topics and being primarily focused on intellectual and social development, is sufficiently different from regular school to add diverse experiences to the students' everyday lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TFI government students (in neighboring classrooms at the same school) do not have access to these opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL-LEVEL OUTCOME</td>
<td>ACTION TO TAKE</td>
<td>ACTION TO TAKE</td>
<td>ACTION TO TAKE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the already highly differentiated offering of extracurriculars to all students at TFI schools.</td>
<td>Add more activities to the already successful Children's Festivals, as resources allow.</td>
<td>Additional extracurricular activities are outside the purview of SEF. SEF could simply occasionally do a unit on dance or sports as their main focus for a few weeks or a month.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Report Card summarizes the extracurricular and enrichment activities that each NGO plans in addition to its regular instruction.
Responses to ‘emergencies’ and criticisms

The three organizations can also change their methods and practices with different speeds and abilities. Sometimes this is necessary when an unexpected event occurs or if an organization’s practices are called into question by the school, students, or students’ families. Since TFI has a separate system from the rest of the government schools in which it works, it does not have many apparent issues with criticisms from students or parents. There are occasional criticisms from teachers, but in those situations, it is TFI’s government relations team that usually handles the complaints, not the TFI teachers themselves. In Aspire, the teachers, program managers, and senior staff are all involved in solving big problems when they come up, working together with the various actors at schools to come up with a new solution, even if it involves completely changing how their program is structured. SEF, meanwhile, is small enough and flexible enough that it does not encounter emergencies or criticisms (plus parents electively choose to send their children there).

Teach for India

TFI is very rigidly locked into its methods because it has a contract to directly teach a certain number of students and it has agreed to teach a particular syllabus/curriculum. For TFI to make drastic changes (like SEF does whenever it feels the need), they would have to wait until the end of the school year, talk with district officials about a new plan, create a completely separate and new MOU (memorandum of understanding), and then implement the new strategy.

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71 Learned in an interview with a TFI city-level Delhi administrator on October 10, 2015.
in schools. The exact same methods are being used in TFI classrooms across India and there is no flexibility for adapting practices to the specific context of each classroom or subgroup of students.

TFI does not appear to experience much resistance from schools on a day to day basis (likely because of the separate, parallel system in which they operate) but if they would get resistance, as revealed in an interview with a member of their Delhi senior staff\(^2\), its government relations team would resolve the disagreement by enforcing their contract with the school. The job of the government relations team is to get the signature of every school headmaster (in addition to that of key district-level bureaucrats) every time the contract requires renewal. Later on, if disputes come up, they can simply point to the contract and say that all parties have already agreed to a particular structure of the intervention. Nevertheless, the resolution of any such disputes may also involve efforts from TFI teachers and program managers at the school level to compromise with whomever complained, but the key point is that the program would not be in jeopardy in any way. It appears that in such a circumstance, TFI would continue to implement its program exactly as before, with little or no change. In fact, I did not witness or learn of such a high-magnitude dispute at any point throughout my research on TFI. I was simply told that a contract is made and that TFI can point to that contract for enforcement. With Aspire, an unresolved dispute could, as in the example below, change the way they operate in schools. They too have a contract which they could point to, but their model is more flexible, with the goal of being able to help each school in any way possible. Owing to its smaller size, Aspire appears to be at the mercy of a small number of district level officials, meaning that any major resistance

\(^2\) On October 10, 2015.
from teachers or headmasters could jeopardize their operations at any moment. This difference is also demonstrative of TFI’s much more specialized leadership bureaucracy: In each city in which it operates, TFI has separate staff teams for many functions, including government relations.

Aspire

Aspire is all about adapting to subgroups of students, as is the case with their curriculum as described earlier in this chapter. As already described, Aspire teachers both attend school six days per week and also appear to do much more structured work outside of school than TFI teachers do. Aspire's approach from the start is to measure the level of each student with simple baseline tests, identify who needs help, and give it to them in a way that helps them progress from their current level through the steps in the learning rubric. Aspire also explicitly aims to build good relations with the headmaster and everyone else at the school and support them in whatever capacity they may want. This requires them to be ready to adapt very quickly and gracefully. An example of this happened at Aspire School A.

As background, note that the typical way in which government school students learn is that they are taught a chapter from a textbook by their teacher and then they have to write down certain notes or exercises from this chapter into their notebooks (they refer to them as their “copy books” or “copies”). Some parents check their children's notebooks to see what they are doing at school. This process of copying content into notebooks is strongly tied to what learning means to teachers, students, and parents, as Chapter 5 explores further.

At the same time, Aspire does most of its remedial work through worksheets or oral activities, meaning the students do not write nearly as much or at all in their notebooks. During
the summer of 2015, a parent of an Aspire student at the school discovered that his child’s notebook was empty. He complained to the school principal that his child was not being taught anything at school and that the Aspire program was not teaching correctly. This complaint gathered momentum as multiple parents and some government teachers agreed with these opinions and demanded that Aspire be shut down or modified. After lengthy meetings and negotiations, it was decided that Aspire teachers would henceforth go into classrooms while the government teachers were teaching, rather than having students of their own in a separate classroom. The Aspire teachers at Aspire School A, from that point onwards, began to assist the regular government teachers with their teaching, including helping weaker students while students were doing exercises or solving problems and helping teachers prepare worksheets. The new system was referred to by Aspire teachers at Aspire School A as the “support system,” while the old system (still occurring at all other Aspire schools) was called the “remedial system.”

At the time my fieldwork ended, Aspire was still in the process of determining how exactly and if the “support system” was going to work. It was just a few months old at the time. Whereas each of the three Aspire teachers at the school used to have his/her own classroom with students coming in and out throughout the day at set times, they became assigned to rotate from classroom to classroom throughout the school. For example, one teacher spends 9:00-10:30am split between two grade 1 classrooms and 11:00am-1:00pm split between two grade 5 classrooms, as a support person. Critically, Aspire teachers were no longer able to keep a file on every student in the new support system. Before, they knew who all was coming through their

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73 Though it was a recurring topic throughout the fall of 2015, I learned most of my information about this incident from a meeting with a senior Aspire administrator on October 3, 2015 and from a teacher at Aspire School A on October 13, 2015.
classroom and could easily keep records. Now, they were faced with being asked to help any student at any time and it would be overwhelming to keep records. I asked one of the teachers about this issue, positing that this would be a huge blow to Aspire if they had to stop keeping the records that were so important to their entire strategy (and which she had bragged about to me multiple times before, saying how good they are and eagerly wanting to show them off to me). She initially did not say much but eventually stated that this was a blow and that ideally they would be able to continue keeping a file on each student.\textsuperscript{74}

I also interviewed a senior administrator about the incident and the switch to the support system.\textsuperscript{75} She explained that, actually, the support system is closer to what they eventually want to be doing, since Aspire's ultimate goal is to spread their practices to government school teachers. So having their own personnel inside the same classrooms as regular teachers is in some senses a further step towards this goal. She said her hope is that the Aspire teachers co-teaching with and supporting the government teachers would lead to the adoption of certain Aspire methods throughout the school. Therefore, to her, the incident at Aspire School A had led them to an experiment that she has wanted to conduct anyway to see whether Aspire’s work could spread to other teachers.

\textit{Simple Education Foundation}

SEF operates completely independently of government schools and can change as required. An example of this rapid ability to change is the decision to 1) move the learning center in summer of 2015 from a rented apartment to the living room of the family of one of the

\textsuperscript{74} This interaction occurred at TFI School A on November 18, 2015.

\textsuperscript{75} On October 12, 2015.
students and 2) use the savings from this move to buy laptops for the students to use on a daily basis, completely shifting the medium of all instruction from paper to computer. In my time studying SEF, I did not become aware of any conflicts or emergencies that emerged. Students were engaged, energetic, and happy while parents continue to be willing to pay the small monthly fees necessary to sustain the organization. The founders (one of whom is also the teacher) are extremely flexible and try hard to create a community-appropriate learning environment for the students.

*Comparing responses to criticism across the cases*

On the face of it, it might seem like the variation in ability to change or respond to criticism could be explained only by the differences in size, age, and embeddedness in the government system of the organizations. But another contributing factor appears to be the values and approaches of the organizations themselves. I am less familiar with the founding team of TFI, but I know that their goal was to mimic the Teach for America program in the United States, which also trains individuals with no teaching background and plugs them into a classroom for two years. I came to know the founders of Aspire and SEF quite closely, however, and met with them on a regular basis throughout my fieldwork. The Aspire founder states repeatedly that Aspire should support the schools in whatever capacity possible, with the goal of helping the weakest students do better. The SEF co-founder and teacher says that he wants the students to be engaged in completely different ways of learning from the mainstream system and is constantly working and experimenting to find new ways to do this.
TFI's approach is to replicate its existing structure in a much more rigid way. There is much less noticeable classroom-to-classroom variation in TFI than in Aspire, given that the latter instructs teachers to mold themselves to fit the needs of the school\textsuperscript{76}. The incident at Aspire School A is an example of how Aspire has set itself up to adapt to what the school needs, even if it means dropping their remedial classrooms and some of their strategies.

\textsuperscript{76} Of course, SEF just has one classroom so cannot be considered in the question of classroom-to-classroom variation. Note that this variation is an important topic of Chapter 6.
### Report Card: Responses to Criticisms: How do the NGOs respond when they are challenged?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL/ POLICY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>TEACH FOR INDIA</th>
<th>ASPIRE</th>
<th>SIMPLE EDUCATION FOUNDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigid Plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A contract (MOU*) is made between TFI and government school and renewed on a regular basis. A member of TFI's government relations team goes to visit each headmaster to get their approval for renewal. The contract states that TFI will exclusively run certain classrooms. *Memorandum of understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bureaucratic Action</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any challenges to TFI's actions are dealt with at the bureaucratic level. TFI government relations team and program managers negotiate with the school principal and district-level officials to resolve the problem. TFI continues to operate as per its predetermined plans, rarely changing strategies at any one school as a result of conflict. Such conflicts are rare in the first place due to the low interaction between TFI and mainstream school operations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-Level Outcome</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct auxiliary community relations work to gain support from parents and government teachers for TFI methods. Some TFI teachers do reach out to their students' families.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to Take</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure that the mission of supporting the school does not get in the way of doing good work and carrying out the mission. (For example, substitute teaching in place of regular government teachers takes Aspire teachers away from their own, likely more important remedial teaching)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions to Take</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Look for opportunities to integrate these methods into the mainstream schooling of the students, at their government school itself.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This Report Card shows how each organization's policy, planning, and curriculum impacts how they respond to challenges that come up and to criticism or accusations towards their work.
Understanding the differences and their consequences

The three NGOs, despite appearing to have similar goals of ending educational inequality and transforming schools into places where students can learn and improve their futures, are extremely different in their strategies and organizational forms. As shown by the evidence presented in this chapter, each organization’s policies and rules about how it manages its own teachers and how they interact with everyone in the school environment impact the extent to which they integrate within a school and the learning environment outcomes for the students.

The key findings of this chapter are located in Box 4.8.

TFI teachers keep fully to themselves as much as possible while attempting to implement the exact same curriculum as the rest of the government school teachers in a separate or parallel system. Aspire practices cautious integration within the school as much as possible, while attempting to implement a flexible curriculum for just math and Hindi that adapts to student needs. SEF remains separate from government schools, instead hosting government school students in its own learning center and using creative curriculum to strengthen, supplement, and broaden what they are already being taught at school. Both TFI and Aspire fall under the type of partnership that Coston (1998) would classify as “Competition,” in which government actors feel threatened by NGO activities and in which government and NGO actors do not work well together in the field. And of course SEF would not be classified as being in any type of partnership.

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77 As Chapter 5 will further address, there is no evidence of any successful collaboration between NGO and government teachers or any evidence of spillover in behaviors from the former to the latter.
The findings of this chapter can also be interpreted through the lens of neoinstitutional theory, which is used in the literature on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to help make sense of partnerships. The theory predicts that the structures of partnerships and the organizations involved will succumb to isomorphic pressure and look the same as each other. However, in the case of the three NGOs studied here, this is not found to be the case. This suggests that there may not yet be a single legitimate model within the organizational field of education PPPs in India for how to choose curriculum, manage teachers, and respond to challenges. It also suggests that isomorphic pressures may currently be low in this field.

Box 4.8 - Key findings of Chapter 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational structure or policy</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigid adherence to government curriculum</td>
<td>Syllabus problem: teachers must rush to cover all of the material prescribed in the syllabus (curriculum) for a given semester, ultimately going too quickly for the students to retain anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible, rubric-based curriculum</td>
<td>Teachers can provide a more student-specific, customized pace of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions manuals or additional teacher training are not available</td>
<td>Teachers sometimes are unable to tell students the correct answers. Teachers lacking experience in a particular subject have trouble teaching it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tight management of teachers</td>
<td>Teachers see other teachers, program managers, and senior staff on a regular basis at a central office after school and are highly integrated in the organization they work for, beyond their own school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loose management of teachers</td>
<td>Teachers are siloed at their own schools, leaving immediately after school and having little or no connection to the rest of the organization for which they work. Inexperienced volunteers end up teaching in place of full-time teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 4.9 - Implications of NGO organizational structures on neoinstitutional theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction of the theory</th>
<th>Education NGOs working with government school students will assume similar organizational structures, policies, and practices to one another.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Findings and evidence</td>
<td>The NGOs vary heavily in…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                          | ● TFI: loose management, low interaction  
|                          | ● Aspire: tight management, high interaction  
|                          | ● SEF: informal/unnecessary management structure                                                                                                                                 |
|                          | **Policy**                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                          | ● TFI: parallel system, no (required) integration with school  
|                          | ● Aspire: cautiously integrated system, heavy school integration  
|                          | ● SEF: work separately with government school students                                                                                                                                 |
|                          | **In-school teaching and circumstances**                                                                                                                                       |
|                          | ● TFI: fixed government curriculum and schedule  
|                          | ● Aspire: own fixed curriculum, flexible schedule  
|                          | ● SEF: own flexible curriculum, flexible schedule                                                                                                                                 |
|                          | **Extracurricular activities**                                                                                                                                                |
|                          | ● TFI: Many activities only for TFI students  
|                          | ● Aspire: Children’s Festival for all students  
|                          | ● SEF: No additional enrichment                                                                                                                                               |
|                          | **Responses to criticisms**                                                                                                                                                   |
|                          | ● TFI: Bureaucratic-level resolution  
|                          | ● Aspire: Collaborative problem solving  
|                          | ● SEF: No known criticisms                                                                                                                                                   |
| Theoretical interpretation | There is no one *legitimate* model yet within this organizational field, not only with respect to curriculum and school-based operations, but also in the areas of organizational structure and teacher management. For the time being, isomorphic pressures are low. |
| Practical implications   | There is still choice in the forms that NGOs and their interventions take, meaning that schools, teachers, parents, etc can continue to try different things without worrying about the legitimacy of their model. |
| Possible causes          | TFI is part of a global network which follows set guidelines, whereas Aspire and SEF are more local and independent.                                                      |
Theoretical implications

As explained in the literature review in Chapter 2, neoinstitutional theory is one of the main theoretical frameworks used to understand public-private partnerships (Matos-Castano et al 2014, Ramanath 2008, Hammerschmid & Angerer 2005). Neoinstitutional theory predicts isomorphism within an established organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell 1983, Meyer & Rowan 1977). In other words, we would expect to see many similarities emerge (and increasingly over time) when comparing organizations like these three. Of course, in another eight years, when all three of them are over ten years old and have a few cohorts of high school graduates, perhaps we would see some more isomorphic pressure having an influence. But at the moment there is no evidence to suggest that this will be the case. This is because the deliberate policy and rules of each organization dictate very different strategies for implementation of their programs. The different strategies and policies of each NGO lead to different capabilities and behaviors of teachers, which lead to different outcomes at the school level when the teachers teach students and interact with government personnel. For these organizations to become more similar, isomorphic pressures would have to force both written policy and in-school practices to change.

The lack of visible isomorphism in these NGOs is arguably good for all parties involved. For schools, students, and officials, it means that if there are, in the near future, choices about interventions that may affect them, they could have some choice over the nature of that intervention. Based on the evidence gathered in this dissertation, there is no single legitimate model for an NGO intervening in a government school. School officials, school personnel themselves, and the NGO itself can still operate with flexibility in how an intervention will work
and there will not be pressure for it to be structured in one particular way. The number of education NGOs in Delhi and India as a whole will likely only increase over the coming decade or two. Having control over the models they adopt is critical to starting and sustaining interventions and programs that have positive impact on students and change the way lifelong members of the system (meaning career government school teachers and government officials) understand their work and behave around students, which is the ultimate goal.

These findings suggest that we may be at or before a tipping or convergence point in the field of education interventions in India. Over the next few decades, during which educational interventions that intervene in government schools will become more common, more standard models will be shaped, selected for, and become the norms for most future interventions. For now, we have these three and many more models of interventions which are all unproven. Even Teach for India, the oldest of the three, does not have any adult graduates yet in Delhi. There are no students who completed the program with whom to follow up. We do not even have controlled data, to the extent I am aware, to test the impact of these interventions on the affected students compared to similar students in similar classrooms (the NGOs do not, even in the few cases when they do have test scores of their own students, compare the outcomes of their own students to control cases). As certain models start to be tested more regularly and as the data accumulates, I hypothesize that stronger norms will emerge and this same study, conducted 20 years in the future, would find much more isomorphism at play. This is something for future research to investigate.

One potential cause of the differences in organizational structure and management strategies (lack of isomorphism) is that TFI is affiliated with a global network of educational
organizations that use an identical model to enter schools. Whereas Aspire and SEF are fully independent, TFI is within an organizational ecosystem that has global norms and strong ideas about what is and is not legitimate. So while TFI does feel the freedom to choose which curriculum it uses (in the past it used the American Common Core before deciding to use the Indian government’s NCERT curriculum), which extracurricular activities to do, how much to pay its teachers, etc, the basic model of replacing government teachers with NGO teachers is identical and, it seems, will never be subject to change. Since Aspire and SEF are more independent, not only do their models vary from each other but they are also free to change their models whenever they see fit (as in the examples from Aspire School A and SEF’s switches to monthly team and computer-based projects). The rigidity of the model to which TFI adheres may be another reason that each of their classrooms or schools is a very siloed operation, whereas Aspire has much more collaboration across teachers at different schools, with teachers seeing each other after school and sometimes having the whole Aspire staff work on a project in one school.

Box 4.10 - Recommendations for all education NGOs

- Maintain strong connections between each teacher and the rest of the organization so that everyone is on the same page. Teachers teaching the same material can share lesson plans and advice.
- Keep program managers well-integrated in and apprised of the day-to-day workings in each school. This way they are in a position to hold teachers accountable.
- Look for ways to make the curriculum as synchronized with student learning levels and speeds as possible.
- Carefully keep track of student progress to help determine what they should learn next, areas to reinforce, and change over time. Carefully kept data can also be used to demonstrate the legitimacy of the program beyond all doubt.
- Provide appropriate instructional support to teachers, such as solution manuals and resources to consult for topics with which they are unfamiliar.
- Alter plans and contracts to teach material at appropriate speeds.
- Strike a balance between immersion in the school and doing organization-specific work.
Practical implications and recommendations

Aspire teachers from different schools see one another multiple times each week at their central office, whereas TFI teachers are free to go home after school and less frequently see teachers from other schools (as is the case for government teachers). As a result, Aspire is able to achieve more intra-staff communication and synchronization. TFI teachers are much more autonomous and disconnected from the organization as a whole. But given its large size and administrative staff within Delhi, it easily could facilitate weekly teacher meetings at central locations. This way, teachers who are all teaching the exact same curriculum (due to the syllabus problem) could collaborate on lesson planning, practice teaching, and other forms of preparation. They could also have more support from their program manager and other superiors.

The differences between TFI and Aspire with regards to supervision of teachers and curricular decisions also provide some valuable insight. TFI teachers have low supervision by managers and low autonomy over the curriculum (due to the syllabus problem, resulting from the government curriculum they have chosen to use). Aspire teachers have high supervision but high autonomy over the curriculum. Both of these are unusual. Usually (in any setting), those who are heavily supervised have low autonomy and those who are lightly supervised have high autonomy. Instead, TFI tells its teachers, “stick to the rules, but we won’t check on you much” whereas Aspire says “feel free to come up with new plans every week, but we need to come up with that plan together and you can’t use it until we approve.” In this case, as evidence in this chapter shows (and as Chapter 5 expands upon), when teachers are given autonomy and low levels of support in a volatile government school environment, they end up facing too much stress and chaos to be effective. This, compounded by the syllabus problem, means that teachers
are unprepared and cannot cater to the needs of the students, most of whom need to spend much more time than the syllabus allows in order to master a concept. Compared to Aspire, TFI teachers are not able to run their classrooms with the same level of rigor or work with their students towards end goals. They teach what they are required to teach each week and then move on, exactly how government teachers operate.

Teachers need an administrative structure behind them to help them with their work and then hold them accountable. The existing government school system certainly does not do this for its own teachers and while TFI has a structure in place that could allow for this, it is not currently how they choose to organize themselves or the way their contract is set up with the government. The contract is set up such that TFI must cover the entire syllabus each semester. Therefore, the main recommendations for TFI (and similar organizations), based on this research into its internal workings at school and beyond, are to give more instructional support to teachers, monitor and mentor them more, and hold them accountable for the way in which they implement the program in schools. Another key recommendation is to alter the contract with the government in light of the empirical reality of the syllabus problem: students are not able to learn at the dictated speed and trying to teach them this fast is not productive. TFI and similar organizations should be allowed to gauge student progress and adjust accordingly. Even though Aspire teachers are monitored more heavily than TFI teachers, Aspire as a whole organization has much more autonomy and freedom to pivot, innovate, or audible, whereas TFI must stick to the initial game plan even if it does not always make sense during the game.

Aspire’s goal, in these same (types of) government schools, however, is specifically to help students catch up through remedial education. Aspire is also good at keeping track of
student data. In Delhi, Aspire differs from TFI not only in its curriculum and approach to school integration but also in its size and legitimacy. Even though Aspire is entering hundreds of schools in Odisha, it is not well-known. Aspire should focus on using their data to demonstrate the value of their work and grow both in size and legitimacy. *All of these organizations need to keep good data on their own students and on control group students in neighboring classrooms, which they are not doing right now.* It should be written into their contracts with the government that they will do this. Then they can test the effect of their programs on students and show it to key stakeholders.

Aspire should also continue its effort not just to build good relations with schools but to also involve government school teachers in the Aspire curriculum. At Aspire School A, as explained above, this process had already begun, with unknown results. If Aspire can induce their desired habits in government personnel, then Aspire teachers, Aspire managers, and government teachers could all work together to plan and teach. Out of all three organizations, due to the organizational philosophy of intervening upon the entire government school and not just a subset of students, Aspire appears to be best positioned to actually make a change in behavior of government teachers, even though there is no evidence of this so far.

SEF differs most from TFI and Aspire in Delhi in that it does not have any formal, contracted relationship with the government. While it is expanding into Kashmir in partnership with the government, in Delhi it remained completely autonomous throughout my fieldwork. SEF has, by far, the most autonomy over its own operations and teaching. Unlike TFI and like Aspire, SEF did not suffer from the syllabus problem. Teacher management and supervision was

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78 However, in the spring of 2017, SEF began operating a government school in Delhi.
not even a relevant concern at this point because its leadership was so small (a co-founder of the organization is himself the only teacher in Delhi). Nevertheless, SEF’s methods are very rigorously developed, all student work is well-documented\textsuperscript{79}, and the curriculum can flex to the needs of the students at any point. Like the other two NGOs, SEF also does not keep controlled data on its own students. In order to test its value-added to students, SEF would have to give much simpler tests to its own students that could also be given to comparable non-SEF students as a control group. The next step for SEF is to show that it can do work within the government system and attempt to have an impact on government school teachers. However, at this time, the SEF leadership is content to slowly improve its methods at a single learning center while also slowly expanding into Kashmir.

\textsuperscript{79} Most SEF student work was generated on computers and uploaded instantly to cloud storage in Google Drive.
Chapter 5.. A Clash of Learning Cultures: NGOs versus Government Schools

Note to the reader: All direct spoken quotations from research participants in this chapter are translated from Hindi unless otherwise indicated. All quotations originating from text-based sources (from written secondary sources or written communications) were originally in English already.

Introduction

All of the NGOs in this study espouse a specific culture of learning and education that they try to embody in their own actions and disseminate to others wherever they work. Teach for India (TFI), Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation (SEF) all want their students to learn as much as possible, and critical to that goal is how students and teachers behave with each other in the classroom. These organizations not only try to teach content effectively but also try to shape the way students think about school and learning. In other words and as evidence throughout this chapter will show, these organizations are trying to instill a new culture of learning in the students and teachers at a government school.

In opposition to this are the habits and beliefs of students who have had years of school in which they just copy from the board into their notebooks and government teachers who have been operating classrooms their own way for their entire careers. This chapter is about what happens when NGO teachers enter the lives of government school students and teachers and
whose culture wins. In some instances, idealistic and energetic NGO teachers do not appear too different from government ones one year after starting the job and are unable to impart the NGO culture of learning on others. In fewer instances, NGOs are able to change the habits and beliefs of government students (but no evidence of them changing the practices of government teachers in any way was found).

Schein (2010, p. 7) explains the importance of understanding organizational culture, which is also applicable to school culture:

*Cultural forces are powerful because they operate outside of our awareness. We need to understand them not only because of their power but also because they help to explain many of our puzzling and frustrating experiences in social and organizational life.*

He goes on to present an 11-component model of culture (pp. 14-15). Later, specifically discussing organizational learning cultures, Schein writes that “Culture is a stabilizer, a conservative force, and a way of making things meaningful and predictable” (2010, p. 365). Turning specifically to schools, the following is a description of the social environment in a school and how it relates to learning:

*In many ways, building a classroom is comparable to building a small society. There are social norms, expectations and habits. Everyone has his or her roles within the classroom, as individuals would in a society. The leader of the classroom is the teacher, who can choose to oversee his or her small community using whichever tactics he or she sees as most effective. A classroom can have a dictator as a teacher or a teacher who prefers a more democratic environment.*

(University of Texas at Arlington 2015)

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80 Though his definition of a learning culture is ultimately different from how I define it in this chapter.
In addition to these definitions related to the study of culture in organizations or in schools, Patterson (2014) defines culture as being comprised of two components which interact with each other. The first component is one of “constituted cultural knowledge” (p. 7), consisting of

...collectively created declarative, procedural, and evaluative knowledge structures that are unevenly shared, held in common, and distributed, among particular networks of persons. (p. 22)

The second component is one of “cultural pragmatics” (p. 7), consisting of “practical rules for their [the knowledge structures’] usage, as well as contextually bounded alternate knowledge” (p. 22). This two-component process also stands to operate at schools. Drawing from these three definitions of culture, for the purposes of this chapter, I define “culture of learning” as norms, values, habits, and beliefs that 1) tend to govern the behavior of the actors within an educational setting or organization (both consciously and subconsciously\(^{81}\)), 2) tend not to change frequently (though they are subject to gradual change as the actors produce, use, reproduce, and transmit\(^{82}\) them), and 3) influence how the actors understand, justify, and evaluate their own actions and interactions within the educational environment. Multiple cultures of learning can co-exist within one educational setting or space, as in the case of government and NGO teachers espousing different cultures of learning despite sharing the same school premises\(^{83}\).

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\(^{81}\) Meaning that in some cases, the actors will be aware that they are being impacted by the culture of learning at their school (or learning center), while in other cases they will not be aware of this process.

\(^{82}\) These four processes are from Patterson’s second component of culture, though I have reordered them (2014, p. 7).

\(^{83}\) Schein also provides an example, albeit from the corporate world, in which multiple work cultures exist within a single organization (2010, p. 371, Case Example).
This chapter features sections on the school day and time use, the culture of learning in
government schools, teacher absenteeism, government teachers' perspectives on NGO
interventions, and a summary of empirical findings. At the root of the phenomena studied in this
chapter are the unique approaches to learning of government and NGO teachers. NGOs
especially are known for wanting to stand out as agents of change and be different from the
Similarly, governments and their actors can also feel threatened by NGO activity (Fisher 1997).

Culture (also called climate or environment) at schools or universities is known to have a
close relationship to change processes or productive learning environments (Thapa et al 2013,
“institutions that violated their institutional culture during the change process experienced
difficulty.” Kotter and Heskett’s (1992) research on corporate cultures finds similar results in the
companies they studied. As Kotter (2011) explains,

>We [...] [argue] that strong corporate cultures that facilitate adaptation to a
changing world are associated with strong financial results. We found that those
cultures highly value employees, customers, and owners and that those cultures
encourage leadership from everyone in the firm. So if customer needs change, a
firm's culture almost forces people to change their practices to meet the new
needs. And anyone, not just a few people, is empowered to do just that.

Parallels between this research from the corporate world and the situation of schools can be
drawn, if we consider the school to be providing a commodity just like a corporation. All of this
work shows that organizational culture impacts success or failure. Bjork’s (2004) research on
Indonesian schools demonstrates the inertia that can occur when those at the top (officials or
headmasters) and bottom (teachers) of the school system are not on the same page as each other.
Whereas most existing research looks at organizational or school culture on its own, I examine what happens when two opposing organizational cultures meet head-to-head.

The key findings of this chapter are that 1) Government teachers, on one hand, believe that some students are not capable of learning, instill this belief in all of their students, and give more attention to those who they believe are capable of learning. NGO teachers, on the other hand, give equal attention to all students. 2) Government teachers start class late while many NGO teachers are more efficient when possible. 3) Government teachers create an atmosphere of discipline in the classroom, with the primary goal of having students write down content into their notebooks rather than gain a full understanding of the material. NGO teachers' classrooms are more organic and the teachers do make an effort to teach effectively. 4) Some NGO teachers adopt certain government teacher behaviors such as arriving late, being absent, not checking student answers or following up with students, and deviating from the stated schedule. Government teachers were never observed to adopt any of the behaviors of NGO teachers.

Note that this chapter mostly features the NGOs Teach for India and Aspire, while mostly leaving out Simple Education Foundation, which does not intervene in any government schools directly (and instead teaches government school students after school at their own location). However, the case of SEF and its own culture of learning is useful to make comparisons to what happens within the government school environment and is used in this capacity when appropriate in the chapter.
The school day and time use

Box 5.1 - Ideal and actual daily schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal/written schedule</th>
<th>Example of actual schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>Prarthna (assembly) begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>Students go to classrooms, attendance is taken, announcements are made, and instruction begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Mid-day meal break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Instruction resumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>School day ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the typical written (ideal) daily schedule in the government schools where TFI and Aspire operate. Ideally, all operations would follow this schedule on the left side. In reality, we see strong deviations from this schedule, an example of which is on the right side. NGO teachers end up being forced (and sometimes even choose) to follow this deviant schedule on the right.

This section presents school-level dynamics at selected key points throughout the school day at a typical government school in which TFI and Aspire operate. It covers the morning assembly and the process of students going from the assembly to the classroom, initial instructional periods, and the mid-day meal and instruction thereafter.

84 This is the schedule of Aspire Schools A and B, confirmed through personal correspondence with an Aspire Program manager on June 30, 2017.
85 As evidence in this section shows, the action or inaction of government teachers often causes delays to the daily schedule, such as having long staff meetings and ending the mid-day meal period late. In some of these situations, NGO teachers (especially those with Aspire) must also abide by this tardy schedule and wait until the government teachers resume class sessions.
Morning assembly and going to the classroom

A typical school day at a government school, for students of all ages, starts with an assembly with all of the students and teachers. For schools that start in the morning, assembly starts at 8:00 a.m. (or sometimes 7:30 a.m.) in a central courtyard area. This assembly lasts about 30 minutes and is called ‘prarthna’ (प्रार्थना), literally meaning prayers. The morning assembly, though not exclusively meant for prayers, usually features at least a few religious chants or songs that the students and some teachers sing together. The following observation from the typical morning assembly at Aspire School A helps illustrate this (all quotes are translated and paraphrased from Hindi):

As 8 a.m. arrives, uniformed girls and boys flood into the main gate of Aspire School A. Many students come on foot, in groups of two or three, while others hop off the backs of their parents’ scooters or motorcycles. The students who arrive a few minutes late run through the gate to join the morning assembly. Students place their school bags in their home classrooms if there is time or just leave them along the perimeter of the school’s open central courtyard. Students sit cross-legged on the ground in neat rows along with the other students in their classroom, often in two parallel rows for each classroom. Teachers stand and occasionally pace around their students, monitoring that the students stay quiet and listen or participate in the assembly.

The headmaster, standing on an elevated part of the courtyard used as a stage, begins the assembly by speaking into the microphone, announcing that the assembly will begin and giving
any reminders to the students: “Okay, students. We will begin now. Please sit down. Please remember to remember and tell your parents that there will not be school held on Friday or Saturday this week because of the festival.” All of the government teachers (who are not absent today) have already arrived. The Aspire teachers will arrive later, in the middle of the assembly.

After this, students would partake in exercises, which were identical every day. Again, from Aspire School A:

Two fifth-grade students come to the stage, standing on opposite sides. In between them is a large vertical drum. All of the students in the courtyard rise and spread out slightly but remain in their class lines. The headmaster begins rhythmically beating the drum with a stick at around 90 beats per minute. With each beat, all of the students, following the leaders on stage, move into a different position, moving one hand outstretched above their heads and then the other hand on the next beat. The outstretched hands then move out to the sides over the course of the next two beats. The students then drop their arms, now dangling at their sides, in the next beat. They then begin to swing their arms back and forth, still in time with the drum, for a number of beats. After this, they rapidly sit down and perform a number of similar leg and hand motions while seated.

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86 Though this procedure occurred every school day, this particular observation took place on the morning of October 15, 2015 at Aspire School A.
87 Observed on the morning of October 15, 2015 at Aspire School A.
Over a total of six months of fieldwork which involved attending TFI and Aspire Schools daily, I observed that frequently, though not every day, a teacher would give a lecture to the whole student body during prarthna about a topic that is unrelated to their school curriculum. For example, at a time when many students and community members at TFI School A were coming down with dengue fever, one teacher told the students during the morning assembly about the need to take precautions against mosquito bites and to rest when infected\textsuperscript{88}. The teachers take turns giving these lectures -- which do not necessarily happen every day -- and choosing their content. On the anniversary of a historical event, a teacher may choose to lecture about the event and its significance to Delhi or India. The lecture usually lasted about 10 minutes.

After this, the students participated in singing or chanting. At Aspire School A, the assembly always finished with chanting of the Gayatri Mantra:

\textit{Three second-grade students got out of their places in line at the assembly and came to the stage. They huddled around the microphone and began to chant,}

\textit{“Om bhur bhuvah svah}
\textit{tat savitur varenyam}
\textit{bhargo devasya dhimahi}
\textit{dhiyo yonah prachodayat”}\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{88} Observed on the morning of September 15, 2015 at TFI School A.
\textsuperscript{89} Translated as "Om, who is dearer than our breaths is self-subsistent, All Knowledge and All Bliss. We meditate upon that adorable effulgence of the resplendent Vivifier of the Universe, Savita” (Pathar 2001).
The rest of the student body chanted along with the voices of these three young students coming through the speakers. All of the students repeated the Gayatri Mantra five times to end the assembly.

At the conclusion of the assembly, students scatter and go to their own classrooms, some collecting their school bags along the way. Teachers linger in the courtyard, chatting with each other and slowly drifting towards the headmaster’s office, which happens to be very close to the stage used in the assembly\textsuperscript{90}.

Note that the morning prarthna, which all students are required to attend every day at each of the schools studied, is one of the only times at which Teach for India students partook in the same activity in the same place as non-TFI students. At the end of prarthna, TFI students would go straight to their own classrooms with their TFI teacher(s). Non-TFI students would go to their own, separate classrooms with their respective government teachers. At Aspire schools, the students go to their regular classrooms with government teachers and then Aspire teachers will go to those classrooms later to pull them out for remedial classes. These procedures occurred on a daily basis, simply as a result of the differences in the two intervention designs\textsuperscript{91}. One exception is Aspire School A, where they are experimenting with the “support system” model, described in detail in Chapter 4. At this school, some students would, after prarthna, go directly to a classroom that is co-taught by an Aspire teacher and a regular government teacher together.

\textsuperscript{90} Observed on the morning of October 15, 2015 at Aspire School A.

\textsuperscript{91} Since the TFI program is designed to take over entire classrooms, students never go to the same place as non-TFI students as a requirement, except for during morning prarthna. Since Aspire is designed to just pull students out of their regular government classrooms for shorter portions of the day, there are still other times at which Aspire students are with non-Aspire students at school.
At all of the government schools where TFI and Aspire work, once prarthna was done, around 8:30, students would be in their classrooms and most of the school campus would be deserted. At this point, around 8:30, students would, in many cases in government-teacher or Aspire classrooms, have about 30 to 45 minutes of time being idle while teachers would do a variety of other work. As observed in Aspire School A:

The first-grade students have just reached the classroom and are settled down at their desks. The teacher momentarily comes to her desk at the front of the room before leaving again and going to the main office. The bench-style desks are arranged in rows, with gaps in the rows forming an aisle from the front to the back of the classroom. Students sit two or three to each desk, most with their desks empty, but some drawing with a pencil on a scrap sheet of paper. One student goes into his bag for a number of seconds while his neighbor inquisitively looks on. The former finds a piece of candy and eats it. On the other side of the room, another student removes all of the items from her bag and puts them on her desk. She then rearranges them and puts them back in her bag. Such activities, clearly intended just to pass the time until the teacher returns, continue for five minutes. Then the teacher pokes her head into the classroom. All the students notice her and become slightly more subdued. She or another teacher makes their presence known to the students periodically over the next 25 minutes, making it clear that students should not become unruly because a teacher would notice it right away. The students continue to pass time. One student stares up at the ceiling with his hands on his desk, while his neighbor grabs him by the shoulders and shakes him, causing both of them to giggle quietly. Then a different

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92 I never observed an exception to the procedures described in this paragraph, which occurred on a daily basis by design.
Meanwhile, in the school’s main office, which is the same size as a regular classroom, multiple teachers gather:

*Teachers gradually filter into the office between 8:30 and 8:40, many having stopped off in their classrooms first to check on their students, collect any necessary paperwork, and drop off any bags or items. The office has the headmaster’s desk on one side with one chair behind it for him to sit and a few chairs on the other side for anyone meeting with him. The rest of the space is open while bookshelves, cabinets, and extra chairs line the walls. The teachers drag the extra chairs over to the side of the room with the headmaster’s desk in order for everyone to meet.*

*“Here is a picture of the boy my niece will marry,” explains one teacher, leaning over to show a photo to another teacher on her mobile phone as the latter looks intently and smiles.*

*“Where did you get these shoes?” a third teacher asks her neighbor while pointing to her feet. “Were they expensive?” Such chatting continues for ten minutes while the headmaster fills out and files paperwork and asks questions to individual teachers about any pending matters.*

*A teacher then gets up to go to his classroom for a moment, while another says to him, “Check on my kids as well, okay?” The former nods as he leaves the office, returning about two minutes later.*
Eventually, just after 8:50, the headmaster formally begins a brief meeting, starting with some announcements: “All bank books need to be checked today and tomorrow.” Teachers had no questions about or responses to this as he looked around, so he continued, “Student teachers will be coming to our school for 45 days. They will teach with you in the classrooms.” Now that the headmaster is finished, nobody is bringing up anything else and casual chatting resumes as before. The time is just 8:52.

Five minutes later, just before 9:00, teachers start to get up and slowly put the chairs back in their places around the perimeter of the office as they continue to chat. Between 9:00 and 9:05, they all finally return to their classrooms.

Pedagogy was never discussed at any meeting of government teachers that I attended. Furthermore, I never witnessed a discussion about teaching methods or how to most effectively achieve learning targets amongst any government personnel. On days when a meeting did not occur in the headmaster’s office, government teachers would simply sit at their desks in the front of their classrooms for approximately 30 minutes, filling out paperwork, reading the newspaper, or looking at their phones while students partook in the idle behavior described above at their desks.

In Aspire schools, where the teachers took remedial students from their regular classrooms in turns into the Aspire classrooms, I never observed a case of an Aspire teacher pulling out their students before 9:15 a.m., after attendance was taken in each student’s primary classroom. Aspire teachers would also attend any staff meetings in the headmaster’s office and

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94 Observed in Aspire School A on the morning of November 19, 2015
then wait until later to start their own classes. In some Aspire schools, other activities would also be happening simultaneously in the mornings. For example, at Aspire School B, Aspire teachers also operate a preschool for younger children, so all of the Aspire teachers could go there to help in the morning if there was no other work to do before going to collect their students.95

Most notably, there were some cases in which an Aspire teacher did have a classroom of students to him/herself right after prarthna. The usual cause of this was when one or multiple government teachers were absent or late to school, in which case Aspire teachers were often asked to fill in. Even in these situations, when the Aspire teacher was the only adult in the room and could have begun teaching right at 8:30, they decided to wait until about 9:15, with the students just sitting at their desks without doing anything productive, as described above. It was a ritual that even the Aspire teachers chose to adhere to at times.96

Teach for India teachers were an exception to this trend of delaying instruction for 30-45 minutes after prarthna. TFI teachers did have to take attendance as well, but they did so right away and then began their teaching. One underlying reason behind this difference could be that TFI as an organization and its individual teachers all see themselves as responsible for taking students through their entire education and sending them first to college and then to stable, well-respected positions in the job market97, whereas Aspire teachers just see each student for

95 I was told about the preschool (also called nursery) and how teachers spend time there in the mornings by an Aspire teacher at Aspire School B on December 11, 2015. I also observed her doing activities with the preschool students on this morning.
96 Observed in Aspire School A on the mornings of November 18 and 19, 2015.
97 Note that TFI attempts to operate such that any student who has a TFI teacher at any point in their schooling will continue to be in a TFI classroom each year until they graduate from 12th grade. During an informal interaction on March 25, 2015, outside of school, a TFI teacher at TFI School A told me that he hopes to support his students throughout their school careers, even after he stops being their classroom teacher.
two hours per day at the most. (There is no evidence so far to say if TFI will succeed, given that by the time of my fieldwork they had no adult alumni with whom to follow up, but this is their goal and it did often appear to reflect positively in the behavior of the teachers in the classroom). Another possible explanation for this difference is that Aspire teachers are immersed in the government school and therefore stand to be influenced more than TFI teachers who operate separately and autonomously even though they too are within the premises of a government school.

*Initial instructional periods*

Once instruction finally begins around 9:15 a.m., Aspire teachers in most Aspire schools, such as Aspire School B, went to the respective classrooms containing any students they needed to work with and summoned them to the Aspire classroom. It would usually be 10-20 students located in two or three classrooms. Once these students had all arrived in the classroom, instruction could begin according to the Aspire lesson plans.98 99

In the regular government classrooms, where non-Aspire and non-TFI students spend their entire school day, government teachers would begin to teach material from government textbooks. All students were together in the same classroom in one group. Students in regular

98 In Aspire School A, where the Aspire and government teachers are usually teaching together (or an Aspire teacher is directly teaching a full classroom of government school students rather than taking a subset of them for remedial classes), due to the new “support system” described in Chapter 4, the teachers will already be with the students and do not need to go pull them out from their classrooms. The “support system” dictates that in Aspire School A (only), the Aspire teachers just help the government teachers to deliver the government material, rather than using separate Aspire curriculum.

99 I did not observe any exceptions to this daily routine at any point, except of course in Aspire School A.
government classrooms were never observed to be tracked or subdivided into groups based on
their progress or abilities. TFI students, will, of course, already be with their TFI teachers where
instruction would have begun around 8:30 or 8:45 a.m. In many of the schools, someone from
outside the school, but who comes to the same school each day during the morning, will visit
each classroom to serve (or offer) tea to the teacher, as in the example of one classroom in Aspire
School A:

The tea delivery man arrives at the classroom and stops in the doorway. The teacher
notices him, stops her teaching mid-lesson, nods that she would like tea, and gestures for him to
come into the classroom. He comes to her desk, pours her a disposable cup of tea, and leaves.
She sips it as the students keep to themselves for two minutes. Once she is finished, she resumes
teaching.\textsuperscript{100}

Other, similar interruptions to the classroom were observed on a nearly constant basis and are
addressed later in this chapter in the \textit{Government teachers’ instructional strategies and treatment
of students} section.

\textit{Mid-day meal and beyond}

Around 11:00 or 11:30, instruction would break for the so-called “mid-day meal”\textsuperscript{101}. In
government schools, mid-day meals are free for all students (though many bring food from home

\textsuperscript{100} Observed on the morning of December 14, 2015

\textsuperscript{101} The mid-day meal break is a lunch break. It is called the mid-day meal in the context of the
government school system.
instead of eating what is given at school). The mid-day meal is an approximately 45-minute
break during which students tend to eat quickly and then play. As you can already see from the
evidence above, government school teachers were not very particular or punctual about when
certain parts of the day end and when others begin. This was particularly the case after prarthna
and again after the mid-day meal. As the children were eating and playing (which can occur all
over the school in most cases, not just in a courtyard or playground area), some teachers will
congregate in a designated room to eat while others will sit together in the areas where the
students play, chatting with each other and supervising the students. This is illustrated by the
following observation from Aspire School B:

As 11:00 a.m. arrives, both government and NGO teachers stop any teaching that is in
progress. Students become loud and talkative as their mid-day meals are delivered to their
classrooms, where they eat before going outside to play. Some students may have brought tiffins
(circular compartmentalized lunchboxes) with them from home, in which case they do not need to
wait for the mid-day meal to start eating. As the students eat, some teachers also eat, while many
wait until going home around 1:00 p.m. to eat. Many of the government teachers mill about in
small groups and can be seen chatting with each other, using their phones, or interacting with
children that come up to them. As the children finish eating, they play all over the school grounds
for the remainder of the lunch period.

At this same time, Aspire teachers all meet together in one classroom with no students.
They look over student work that they have accumulated in small stacks and have brought to
their meeting. As they flip through the work, they make notes about how each student has done
and sometimes pause to show student work to one another. One of them snacks on a few biscuits as she flips through, but the others are not eating anything\textsuperscript{102}.

Teachers are responsible for summoning the students back to their classrooms at the end of the recess period. In the headmaster’s office, a timetable for the school is often visible on the wall, saying when the mid-day meal, and any other recesses, should start and end. At TFI Schools A and B as well as Aspire Schools A and B, I observed that this mid-day meal period started on time but lasted much longer than it was scheduled for, with teachers continuing to chat with each other and children continuing to play for 10 if not 20 or 25 more minutes than the schedule dictated\textsuperscript{103}.

Since they were heavily integrated into the school, Aspire teachers were at the mercy of these day-to-day fluctuations in schedules. TFI teachers, however, were observed to start their teaching much sooner than the government teachers after morning assembly (prarthna) or the mid-day meal. Frequently, the students of TFI teachers at TFI Schools A and B stayed in or near the classroom during the mid-day meal break, so it was easier to summon them back to resume class\textsuperscript{104}. This is an example of how TFI teachers are more insulated from the government school

\textsuperscript{102} This typical example of student and teacher behavior during the mid-day meal was observed on December 15, 2015 at Aspire School B.
\textsuperscript{103} Observed at Aspire School A on October 13, October 15, and November 18, 2015. Observed at Aspire School B on December 8 and December 10, 2015, and on January 20, 2016. Observed at TFI School A on October 17, 2015. Observed at TFI School B on October 7, October 23, and December 7, 2015.
\textsuperscript{104} Note that the urban government schools in Delhi rarely had much open area for playing. They would usually have a central courtyard with the school building built around it. This courtyard was sometimes the only open space for playing, while in other cases there may have been a small grassy or mud area nearby, but usually this was too small to even be appealing to students, and I noticed it was often empty during recess. Aspire School B as well as TFI Schools A and B were all concrete with the central courtyard as the only open area where students would play. Aspire
culture of learning compared to Aspire. This also means that TFI has more opportunities to impart their own culture of learning on the students compared to Aspire. And, by the same logic, SEF has the most opportunity to influence its students. A simple example of this is that TFI teachers will often use behavioral management techniques to keep their students’ attention and they will speak to their students in English. From TFI School B:

Students in the classroom are seated or standing calmly and chatting with each other. Some are writing in their notebooks. They are not unruly, but the classroom is quite loud. The TFI teacher, who has been sitting and working individually with two students for the last five minutes, stands up and surveys the room.

“1, 2, 3, eyes on me!” says the TFI teacher loudly. Most, but not all, of the students stop what they are doing and look at the teacher. The remaining few continue to talk or write, still causing some noise.105

SEF takes this particular strategy a step further:

The SEF students are working together in four small groups, all talking to one another about their work, writing in their notebooks, or typing into one of the four laptop computers on the ground.

School A was also mostly concrete but also had a very thin, small grassy and mud area on one side of the building, where I never observed any children playing.105 Observed on October 7, 2015.
“1, 2, 3, eyes on me!” the SEF teacher calls aloud as his students are working together in small groups.

“1, 2, eyes on you!” the students reply, after which the room immediately falls completely silent.¹⁰⁶

TFI teachers appear to speak in English to their students as much as possible.¹⁰⁷ These small differences in the approaches of TFI and government teachers help to create a separate learning environment for the students. TFI’s separate extracurricular activities, as described in Chapter 4, also help create a separate culture of learning for their students (at the expense of integrating with the rest of the school system, as also explained in Chapter 4).

Once teachers and students return to their classrooms after the mid-day meal break, two more hours of instruction (are scheduled to) remain. This time runs very similarly to the morning instructional hours. At the end of the day, as explained in Chapter 4, the students and teachers leave the building extremely quickly and all of the classrooms are locked up. There is no habit or expectation that teachers will remain at school to take care of administrative work, grading, lesson planning, etc. All teachers leave with the students themselves at 1:00 p.m. (or whenever closing time is). All paperwork and administrative work is conducted by teachers during the school day, at the expense of spending time on instruction with students.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Observed on October 24, 2015.
¹⁰⁷ This is TFI policy. The SEF teacher also speaks to students exclusively in English.
¹⁰⁸ Observed on a daily basis at TFI Schools A and B as well as Aspire Schools A and B.
This section examines the ways in which government and NGO teachers approach learning and teaching differently, with special attention to the unique government school culture of learning. It includes the government teachers’ notions of student abilities, the instructional strategies and treatment of students practiced by both government and NGO teachers, and observations about student behavior in the classroom environment.

The evidence presented in this section shows that, on one hand, in government classrooms, there is a tacit and mutual understanding that many of the students are not going to be doing anything successfully academically during their time at school, so there is no need to teach better or more on any given day. Meanwhile, a few students are perceived by government teachers to be more academically capable and are given more attention. On the other hand, NGO teachers do not practice this form of differentiation and discrimination, attempting to teach all students equally. This difference in approaches to education and the treatment of students by teachers is the focus of this section.

109 This mutual understanding resembles a “veneer of consensus” in Goffman’s (1956: 4) terms. Addressing the phenomena of misrepresentation and the formation of impressions, he writes, “We find that charlatan professional activity of one decade becomes an acceptable legitimate occupation in the next. *We find that activities which are thought to be legitimate by some audiences in our society are thought by other audiences to be rackets. More important, we find that there is hardly a legitimate everyday vocation or relationship whose performers do not engage in concealed practices which are incompatible with fostered impressions” (42). *Note that at this point in the text, Goffman cites an unpublished document by Harold D. McDowell.
Government teachers’ notions of student abilities

Contrary to what some of the examples in this chapter may suggest, it is not the case that government teachers care less for their students than their NGO counterparts. For example, when the safety or physical well-being of a student was in question, I observed government teachers reacting very swiftly and with full attention. In Aspire School B, there was a small accident and a student hit his head on a piece of furniture, causing him to start bleeding. Teachers immediately controlled the situation as well as possible and then drove the student to the hospital in one of their personal vehicles that was parked nearby\textsuperscript{110}. While government teachers do care for the physical well-being of their students, they appear to not believe that their students can amount to much more than their parents have. These parents, especially the men, do largely blue-collar work such as driving auto-rickshaws, selling goods on the street, operating small stores, etc. The women were primarily expected to marry, have children and run their own households (or help run that of their husband’s family)\textsuperscript{111}. Additionally, they often contribute economically beyond work within the household. As government teachers see it, there is no reason to think that anything different will happen in the next generation.

From time to time, there would be a student who the teachers notice performs better than the others. From Aspire School B:

Surveying the classroom, a government school teacher points out one student, “This one is going to go far. Maybe even to college.”

\textsuperscript{110} Observed on December 11, 2015
\textsuperscript{111} These demographic details were told to me by multiple TFI, Aspire, and government teachers throughout the course of my fieldwork.
When asked, “What about the other students?” she replies, “Us ko nahi aata”\(^{112}\).

“Us ko nahi aata” (उस को नहीं आता)\(^{113}\) translates as “He/she doesn’t understand,” “He/she doesn’t learn,” or “He/she doesn’t get it”\(^{114}\). The following occurred often during my observations of government school classrooms in Aspire Schools A and B\(^{115}\):

As students are working on math problems, I (the researcher) pace around the classroom looking at student notebooks. The students are copying the math problems from their textbook into their notebooks and then writing answers to them. Many students are asking each other for answers rather than solving any of the problems.

“How is it going?” I ask one student, pausing at his desk and bending down.

“Fine,” he replies.

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\(^{112}\) Observed on October 8, 2015.

\(^{113}\) This is exactly how teachers (and many others such as students and parents) say it.

\(^{114}\) I debated for some time about whether or not to also provide the literal translation of these words and finally decided to put it in this footnote. The literal translation of “Us ko nahi aata” (उस को नहीं आता) is, in the order the Hindi words appear, “him/her to doesn’t come.” Rearranged for English, it becomes “To him/her [it] doesn’t come.” “Us” can refer to a male or a female. When you do not know how to do or use something, you say “muj ko nahi aata hai” (मुझ को नहीं आता है), which translates to “I don’t understand,” “I don’t know how,” or “I don’t get it” but literally it translates as “[It] doesn’t come to me.” The literal way to say “He doesn’t learn” is “Waha nahi seekhta hai” (वह नहीं सीखता है). So, part of this is simply that for all knowledge, people tend to say “to him [it] doesn’t come / us ko nahi aata” instead of “he doesn’t learn / waha nahi seekhta hai” as a norm. It is more common to express this idea using the former rather than latter construction. But certainly another side of this is that teachers and students truly believe that there are some to whom this type of skill (learning in school) does come and others to whom it does not come, and there is not much we can do to change these initial conditions. There is a cemented, structural, ascribed finality to saying that learning does not come to someone, which is why the literal translation of the language is, in this case, so demonstrative of the government school culture of learning.

\(^{115}\) Though this interaction happened almost identically every time, this particular example is taken from Aspire School A on October 15, 2015.
“Can you show me how to do this problem?” I ask, squatting down to better see his work as the student nods his assent.

Before the student does anything, the teacher of the classroom comes over to us and interjects, “Us ko nahi aata\textsuperscript{116},” such that the student, I, and even other students nearby can hear. The teacher then points to another student and says “Look at his work instead. He does good work.”

Government teachers appeared to believe that everyone has their own, predetermined position within a rigid hierarchy and that these positions cannot be changed. An academically capable student is just an anomalous occurrence rather than the outcome to strive for as far as the government teachers are concerned. Government teachers were never observed to encourage weaker students to become more like the few precocious ones.

Government teachers simply went through the motions of teaching material from government textbooks to the students by having the latter copy notes down into their notebooks, without regard for whether or not they understood them. The few precocious students are simply those who understood the material in addition to copying it. Fieldwork-based research conducted by Dewan (2009) in Indian government schools also reports the same finding:

Teachers also showed insensitivity towards the students. In the classes where teachers were present and teaching, most of them used the blackboard for much of the time, with little involvement or effect. Even though they knew that no more than 10 - 20 per cent students could make any sense of what they were teaching, the teachers either did not, or could not, stop to involve the other children\textsuperscript{117}.

\textsuperscript{116} Meaning “he/she doesn’t get it,” as described above.
\textsuperscript{117} From p. 206. A detailed example is also provided on p. 207 in Box 6.2.
What government teachers appear to mean when they point out these distinctions between students is that there are some who can learn and others who cannot, and everyone knows it. For, say, a fifth grade student who is in the category of non-learners, the student *himself*, not just the teachers and other students, also believes himself to be in this category. He *knows* it to be true. It has been like this for the last four years already and is not going to change. For example, occasionally, one of these students would even indicate to me that he was part of this group by wiggling his hand, shaking his head, and/or saying “nahi aata” to me as I approached or observed him. It is important to stress that this classification and practice of not paying attention to the “non-learning” group of students is *normal* in the classroom of a regular government school teacher. I observed this phenomenon in multiple schools with high regularity.

Nikita, a government teacher at Aspire School B whom I interviewed in her classroom, also adhered to the view that some students can while others cannot learn. She shifted the burden of creating students capable of learning away from teachers and onto families. She explained that the home environment of many students did not allow for them to do well in school. While she is correct that most of the students do not have the same supportive home environment that more stable or wealthy families can provide for their children, she treated this as an insurmountable *prerequisite* to her being able to teach and help a student. This is also reflected in the way she treated her students in front of me. She did not treat them as second class citizens or those who

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118 Observed in TFI School A on September 15, 2015; TFI School B on September 29, 2015; Aspire School A on October 13, 2015, November 18, 2015, and November 30, 2015; and Aspire School B on December 15, 2015.

119 When teachers said to me, “This one doesn’t learn; teach this one instead,” they appear to mean it with 100% sincerity as if they fully expect me to simply react with a nod, say “Ah, okay, got it,” and move on to another, more academically capable student.
were beneath her, but just as those who are unable to learn and whose role it is to sit through class and fill out their notebooks.

During my observation of Nikita’s classroom, she put up math problems on the board for students to solve. Once they had written answers down in their notebooks, they would come to Nikita’s desk to show her their work:

*When the first student came to her desk, Nikita looked at the notebook, became upset, and drew a line through most of the answers, because they were incorrect. She then turned directly to me and said emphatically “Us ko nahi aata!” She then wrote down easier math problems for the student to attempt and sent him back to his desk.*

Nikita did not at any point explain to the student how to do the harder problems.

*Government teachers’ instructional strategies and treatment of students*

The majority of the instruction provided by government school teachers to their students features rote learning and copying content from the blackboard or textbooks into notebooks. Notebooks being filled is what students, teachers, and parents tend to understand as learning. As demonstrated by the incident in Aspire School A, described in Chapter 4, in which parents thought that students were not being taught properly because their notebooks were not as full as usual (because Aspire was using worksheets and loose sheets of paper instead of having students

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120 These interactions and observations occurred on December 16, 2015.
write into their notebooks)\textsuperscript{121}, the notion of learning in government schools is directly related with how much the students write down. This was evident many times in all regular government classrooms in which I observed. As soon as a teacher started writing something on the board, students would have the immediate reaction to write it down too into their own notebooks. If they failed to copy text before the teacher erased it, they frantically pestered a neighbor in order to copy it from the neighbor’s notebook.

Another aspect of government teacher behavior is how they incorporate students into day-to-day organization or logistical tasks. If a teacher needs something, they will often ask any nearby student to help. One of the most common forms of this is to ask students to take a book, paper, cell phone, other item, or verbal message to or from another teacher that is located elsewhere in the building. Students are also often sent to summon teachers or other students. Here are some examples of instructions that I routinely heard teachers giving to students (translated from Hindi):

- “Erase the board” \textsuperscript{122}.
- “Bring a chair for our visitor” \textsuperscript{123}.
- “Clean up this mess” \textsuperscript{124}.

\textsuperscript{121} This led to the so-called “support system” being put into place at Aspire School A, in which Aspire and government teachers would teach alongside each other in the same classroom.
\textsuperscript{122} Observed on January 20, 2016 at Aspire School B.
\textsuperscript{123} Observed on November 18, 2015 at Aspire School A.
\textsuperscript{124} Observed on October 14, 2015 at Aspire School A.
These behaviors were observed repeatedly in government teachers in TFI schools A and B, Aspire Schools A and B, and many other schools in which I observed one or two times. Furthermore, some NGO teachers in TFI and Aspire had also adopted this practice. In many TFI and Aspire classrooms, teachers would often have students do chores such as those listed above.

**NGO teachers’ instructional strategies and treatment of students**

The NGOs appear to try their best to counter the government school culture of learning by emphasizing different goals. NGO teachers have goals in mind for each session of teaching. They also demonstrate concern for whether or not their students understood the information that is being taught. Using the curriculum detailed in Chapter 4, these three organizations try their best to not leave behind any students. An example of this is from a classroom in TFI School B in which the teacher was teaching his students about levers:

"Okay, class,” the teacher began, “now we’re going to learn about levers. Do you know what lever is?” He continued to look at the class for a moment before saying, “Hold on.” He then began looking around the classroom, looking for items with which he could demonstrate a lever. He located a ruler and used it as a lever, using a chalkboard eraser as a fulcrum, to show the students how a lever works.

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125 This goal is hardest to achieve for TFI teachers, who are faced with teaching an entire class, containing some high-performing and some lower-performing students all together in a large group.

126 Observed on December 7, 2015. The teacher was speaking in English.
In this case, the teacher had clearly not planned to demonstrate a lever before he started the lesson. But when he realized that doing so would help his students learn better, he made the effort to quickly demonstrate.

I did not, at any time, observe any favoritism on the part of a TFI teacher towards one group or another. They would point out to me who was particularly capable, just like the government teachers would, but they would not give that student more or less attention than anyone else or indicate that particular students were incapable of learning. I observed that TFI teachers, delivering the same curriculum that the government teachers use, make it a point to go through all of the material in a particular chapter much more thoroughly than most government teachers do. They also do not simply tell their students to copy text and answers from the books or the board into their notebooks.

Aspire, meanwhile, focuses on only the lowest achieving students within a school, the ones who are most in need of remedial curriculum. Aspire’s entire program has the head-on goal of reversing the trend described above, that those who do not perform well in school are blacklisted and not given any attention\textsuperscript{127}.

TFI teachers often use more creative classroom management strategies than regular government teachers. Many of these strategies are quite simple, such as arranging the student desks into clusters of four or six rather than having the students sit in rows\textsuperscript{128}. This is something

\textsuperscript{127} As described earlier, while Aspire does partner with government schools as a whole, its teachers spend most of their time with the weakest ⅓ of students at a school to provide them with remedial education that will help them catch up to the satisfactory level for their age. Therefore, they work exclusively with students who are blacklisted as non-learning students most of the time. Aspire’s model is explicitly designed to target the weakest students at the school and provide the with remedial math and Hindi education.

\textsuperscript{128} Aspire classrooms also feature this arrangement much of the time.
that about half of all TFI teachers that I observed chose to do, with the rest keeping the desks in rows. Note that at many of these schools, desks may be there in a classroom on one day and gone the next, due to an overall scarcity of desks in the school building, so putting the students into seating teams may not make sense if the desks are not always there. Other teachers teach their students to become quiet and listen when the teachers say “1, 2, 3, eyes on me,” as described earlier. Such strategies were not observed to be adopted by government school teachers.

Aspire teachers are teaching material that is specific to Aspire and is based on each student’s progress, rather than having to follow the prescribed government curriculum (and thus making Aspire immune to the “syllabus problem” described in Chapter 4). They also have a select group of 10-20 students in the room at one time who are all at approximately the same learning level. During math lessons, teachers will often give a short lecture to introduce a concept to the students and then have them practice it either in teams or on their own. Often, the second, practice stage will include a worksheet that the students are supposed to fill out. As described in Chapter 4, this work that the students do on a regular basis is carefully reviewed by teachers and documented in each student’s file. During Hindi lessons, teachers will also give a short lecture and then have students do an activity or worksheet. The activities for language learning vary and sometimes even including drawing or painting activities. It is clear that Aspire’s curriculum reflects a very different understanding of how learning should work. Built into this is the idea that all students, not just the highest achieving ones, can make progress and work towards learning goals.

Since Aspire’s program is meant to integrate with the school, rather than create a small school within a school (like TFI), Aspire is still subject to the school’s overall schedule and
operating principles. Aspire teachers are caught in the middle of the two worlds: on one hand, their desired culture of learning is similar to TFI’s and the teachers work even more hours than TFI teachers (by going to the central office after the school day is over and coming into the office on school holidays); but on the other hand, they are trying to integrate fully with government schools and be supportive of government teachers, which means having to compromise. This means that they are not able to teach whenever the rest of the school is not teaching, whereas TFI teachers can, for example, more easily resume instruction after the mid-day meal break.

Since SEF chooses to intervene outside of the schools themselves, it does not have to combat as directly with government school procedures and culture. SEF can choose its own schedule, curriculum, arrangements of students, etc, but these students still come from the very same government system. SEF students were always observed to do their own work rather than copying from each other and, when they needed help, they asked questions to each other and their teacher that indicate that they care about learning new skills and knowledge rather than just filling up their books. For example, when studying about water wasting and water shortages in Delhi, students had to gather, crunch, and present data on water use habits and availability in their own communities. During this project, students were not answering questions with one right answer that they can just copy down. They were asking complex questions, such as the following ones that I observed two students ask:

“If there is not enough water in some places, why do people in other places waste water?”
These young teenage students were asking questions of genuine interest to further their own knowledge and solve problems. SEF students became very interested in the subject matter they were studying to the point that they were genuinely interested in related issues. They asked questions like these on a daily basis. TFI and Aspire students were never observed to ask similar questions or show similar interest in academic topics while in the classroom. Given that SEF students are also government school students, it is evident that SEF has had a tremendous impact on how they think about learning and what it is to them. Therefore, with the few government students that it does intervene upon, SEF is the most transformative out of the three NGOs in terms of impacting the culture of learning of its students.

Classroom environment

One of the most salient features of all government school classrooms, regardless of who is in charge, is chaos. There is no other way to describe it. As the evidence below shows, the students have ebbs and flows of energy that do not appear to correlate to anything else that is going on or to what the teacher is trying to teach. At times, students will be docile and listen, but at other times, they will become unruly, especially when unsupervised. A typical example of this is from a classroom in Aspire School B in which I was observing while the teacher tried to teach Hindi to the students. The classroom has a collective heartbeat that is sometimes suppressed and

129 These observations were made on the afternoon of September 14, 2015.
sometimes elevated. This extended field note shows the chaos that happened when it was elevated:

11:20 a.m.: One student has another in a headlock while entering the classroom. I separated them as they continued to try to fight. Prathiba's class is just getting under way. She had to go out a few minutes ago to get the kids to come in from recess to her classroom. The kids are pretty loud and are not being quiet when she is asking. Now Prathiba is taking attendance and the kids still aren't being quiet. Karuna (another teacher) came to the room to get some papers and yelled at the kids for a bit to be quiet.

11:23 a.m.: Attendance is over. Prathiba is asking the students to stand up in the middle of the room. Now all of the students are in a circle doing a counting activity and sending a clap around the circle.

11:26 a.m.: Game is finished. Prathiba is telling the kids to sit down. The kids won't stay quiet for more than one second literally. There are 13 second and third graders in total. She now starts teaching at 11:27 a.m.

Prathiba is asking the kids what you get when you put together the characters न + ल to form the word नल. The students mostly responded with the right answer. Now they are calming down a bit after she is asking questions. She is asking how many letters were used in the word. Now she is asking the students in turn, one after the other, to say two-character words. She is having each
student stand up when it is their turn. It is taking forever. It is very very common for kids to yell out answers when another student is supposed to give the answer. And of course the students are not being quiet in other regards as well.

11:42 a.m.: All of the kids have been given a blank piece of white paper without lines. They are supposed to write new words as well as ones that they understand on the paper. It is still very hard to control the class, but not as many as before are running around.

11:46 a.m.: About once per minute, someone throws something or a kid yells out that another kid is screwing up. There is also random miscellaneous yelling every 15 seconds on average. I wonder how they stay quiet for a test.

11:55 a.m.: Classroom discipline is just nonexistent. The students are relentless. As soon as Prathiba makes one kid sit back down in their desk, another gets up and starts running around. For example, one kid just stood up and started picking up debris from the ground like paper balls or pencils and punting (drop-kicking) them around the room. This chaos happens all the time.

12:14 p.m.: Now the kids are coloring, so there is a temporary break from the running around. But there is still a lot of noise and singing from the students. The room is filled with noise, just like before.
12:27 p.m.: One student just emptied his pencil shavings onto the floor. Prathiba is telling him to pick them up and put them in the dustbin. He does not comply. She, presumably deciding it is not worth fighting over, does not pursue the issue further, leaving the pencil shavings on the ground. At this point, Prathiba also said that the second grade students can go back to their classrooms, leaving 10 kids in the room at 12:30 p.m.

12:38 p.m.: Now Prathiba is having all of the students chant multiplication tables. One student is stationed in front of the class, either chanting the whole table on his own or leading the rest of the kids in a chant (these activities alternated).

12:43 p.m.: Recitation of tables is over. There are lots of kids roughhousing and fighting. One hit me with an aluminum ball. A few kids threw backpacks\textsuperscript{130}.

It is evident from these observations that the classroom is periodically in an elevated state in which the students are constantly engaged in auxiliary activities that are counterproductive to a learning environment. Such behavior was also observed regularly at TFI Schools A and B and Aspire School A. These behaviors are often violent and chaotic. The observations above are of an elevated time in the classroom, during which the NGO teacher decided to just let the students behave as per their will rather than attempting to control them in some way. They also show that NGO teachers sometimes allow for a more organic rather than disciplinary environment, giving the students some flexibility to be themselves. As one TFI teacher told me during an interview,

\textsuperscript{130} These observations were taken at Aspire School B on December 10, 2015.
“Kids need to be crazy.”  
-Saurav, TFI teacher

As Saurav went on to explain, he meant that teachers need to give children the space to explore and be themselves in order to learn.

While the type of classroom behavior described above did erupt in both NGO and government classrooms when teachers were not present, such activity was not observed in government classroom when the teacher was present. As soon as a government teacher would enter the room, such activity would usually quickly stop. If not, the teacher would shout loudly for everyone to sit and occasionally even physically restrain students to halt their activities. The example from the Aspire classroom above, the explanation from Saurav, and the lack of any observed chaotic behavior by students when a government school teacher is present all show that NGO teachers allow a more organic classroom environment while government teachers maintain more discipline.

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131 On December 14, 2015, in English.
Box 5.2 - Government school culture of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preconceived notions and beliefs</th>
<th>Resulting behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some students are able to learn and others are not. This fact cannot be changed. It is an ascribed, structural characteristic of each student that no amount of teaching can change. <strong>Some kids get it, some kids don’t, and there’s nothing you can do about it.</strong> Teachers and students both perpetuate this belief.</td>
<td>Government teachers point to certain students and say “Us ko nahi aata” (“he/she doesn’t understand”) and then point to a different student, known to be academically capable, saying “teach this one instead.” This hierarchy has also been internalized by the students, who all behave either as ones who can or cannot learn. They too will sometimes say “I don’t learn” or point to another student and say “He/she doesn’t learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School is about learning, which in this case means writing down knowledge into notebooks and solving math problems and writing the answers down into notebooks.</td>
<td>Government teachers put text or math problems on the blackboard for students to copy or answer in their notebooks. Students’ goal is to fill up their notebook with whatever is on the board or with the answers to the math questions, no matter how that answer is acquired (usually by copying from the few students who know, or by writing down a wrong answer). Parents check notebooks and expect to see something written down, though most cannot tell if the answers are correct or if their child learned the material. Students and parents have been programmed this way. Even in NGO classrooms, the habit/goal of students to fill up their notebooks rather than truly learning, even just by copying, is very hard to break.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This box points out the main features of the government school culture of learning, especially the government teachers’ approach to student abilities and their understanding of the purpose of school. These are hypothetical causal relations between government teachers’ preconceived notions/beliefs and their observed behaviors in the classroom.

**Teacher absenteeism**

While it is not a key focus of this chapter or any part of this dissertation, it is important to make mention of the problem of teacher absenteeism and its potential links to the findings of this
chapter. This short section addresses this issue. Teachers being absent from school is a widely known problem in Indian education. One study, using nationally representative data from a survey in which researchers arrived at schools unannounced, found that 22.9% of teachers are absent from non-rural schools (Kremer et al 2005). A similar study, but on a smaller scale, conducted in East Delhi schools found that government school teachers were absent 5.6% of the time (Tooley & Dixon 2007).

Much of the volatility within schools that is described in this chapter could potentially be due to teacher absenteeism. Though it is not documented in my field notes, there were many days on which I would arrive at a school in the morning and learn that multiple government teachers were not coming to school that day. In some cases, they had to do work at a different school. But in other cases they simply did not attend, with no sanctioned excuse. Aspire teachers complained about this often\textsuperscript{132}, because the school often asks them to serve as substitutes in regular government classrooms instead of teaching their own remedial students. The government system itself does not have any substitute teachers.

Absenteeism also appeared to be an issue within the Aspire and TFI staffs, especially TFI. I would very frequently visit schools in which TFI was working and find that at least one TFI teacher was not there. They would be absent due to everything from illness to family weddings. When I would call or message teachers in the morning to confirm, as per previous arrangements, that I would be coming to their class that day, they would very frequently tell me that they would not be there.

\textsuperscript{132} On a regular basis when talking with me as well as repeatedly when giving reports at an all-day Aspire staff meeting on October 10, 2015, which I attended.
Aspire teachers appeared to have better attendance records. The main absences I observed were due to illness or family emergencies and were quite infrequent. It is likely that Aspire teachers were also simply used to working more than other teachers, since they have to go into the central office after school and work on school holidays. If they did not come to the office, administrative staff would know that something is wrong and inquire. In TFI, which is less centralized, if a teacher did not show up to school, nobody would necessarily tell the program manager or any other supervising staff about the absence. It is important to point out that there were also many TFI teachers that did not take advantage of this lack of supervision. Many of them do come to school day in and day out and give their full effort to the two-year appointment. But there is definitely a faction that was observed to take advantage of the situation.

While absenteeism was not the primary focus of my research and I do not have rigorous data on teacher attendance, based on my own observations described above, interviews with teachers, and conferring with those who study education in India (other academics and NGO leaders), it is clear that it is a rampant problem that requires more attention going forward. Members of the government system are aware of this and some measures are being taken. For example, I observed that some government schools have a biometric system with which teachers have to clock in and out so that the government knows exactly when they arrive and depart. However, in the few schools I visited that had these systems, they were just sitting in the headmaster’s office and were not used. In certain other (non-educational) government offices, however, they can be seen in operation.
Government teachers’ perspectives

In addition to observing the behavior of government school teachers and how it differed from that of NGO teachers, I also directly interviewed the former, whenever possible, about their views on the NGO interventions and the differences between the two types of teachers. As demonstrated above, regular government teachers do not experience much chaotic classroom activity due to their disciplinary approach to classroom management. At Aspire School A, a government teacher directly addressed this issue right away when I asked for her opinion of the Aspire program and their teachers. Regarding the latter, she explained,

“They are not able to maintain control over the class the way we are. We can keep a classroom of 50 students in control. They cannot do that.”

-Sameena, experienced government teacher

The reasons for this appear to be twofold: 1) students fear the government teachers more than the NGO teachers, and 2) the government teachers were observed to use stricter disciplinary tactics than the NGO teachers to keep the students in line (such as hitting or threatening to hit). Sameena’s statement shows the way in which some government teachers think about their jobs and how they differentiate themselves from NGO teachers. As with the nature of the schoolwork that government teachers give to their students (such as copying answers to fill up their notebooks), they also view their jobs less as teaching curriculum and more as keeping watch or control over the children.

133 Interviewed on November 20, 2015.
I also asked the headmaster at Aspire School B about his views on the Aspire program:

Researcher: What do you think of the work that the Aspire teachers do here [at your school]?

Headmaster: They do good work but we could do the same thing if we had more teachers.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Headmaster: They take just a few children at a time and work with them. We could do the same thing if we had enough extra teachers. Instead our teachers have to stay with their classes, which have 50 or 60 students. They cannot do two things at once. They can only teach the same thing to all of the students.

Researcher: But if you had the staff, then you could do the same thing as Aspire?

Headmaster: Yes, definitely we could.

Researcher: So do you think there is anything special about what Aspire does?

Headmaster: Not at all. We could do the same thing. But it is good that they are here because we do not have the capacity to do it on our own. It is important work that they are doing.

The headmaster recognized that doing extra, more targeted work with certain students is important, but he did not acknowledge that Aspire is bringing any unique expertise to the situation. He believed that he could lead his own staff in a similar effort if he had enough resources.

134 Interviewed on December 17, 2015, paraphrased from Hindi.
Caste and broader cultural dynamics

The treatment of students by government school teachers arguably has its roots in broader cultural dynamics of Indian society. The mentality accompanying India’s caste system, while not as rigid as in previous eras, is still deeply rooted into Indian society (Kolenda 1985: 1-2). Those who are in lower positions in the social hierarchy must be deferent to or are deprived in favor of those in higher positions (Thorat & Newman 2010). For example, Jodhka and Newman (2010) find that some managers discriminate against Indian workers based on their family status or region of origin, even in this globalized age of meritocracy. Government teachers occupy a higher social position than their students and those students’ families. One simple indication of this is that most government school teachers send their own children to private schools instead of the government schools in which they work\textsuperscript{135}. Government teachers have stable jobs while the parents of government school students have less stable sources of income. On top of this, government teachers are placed in a position of authority over students within the organization of the schools.

Meanwhile, NGO teachers, while also belonging to the same social echelons as government teachers (if not higher)\textsuperscript{136}, are part of organizations that are deliberately trying to

\textsuperscript{135} Learned from multiple undocumented conversations with education experts, government teachers, and NGO staff throughout my fieldwork. Corroborated by correspondence with six NGO personnel or Indian education experts on September 29, 2017 (all of whom verified this).
\textsuperscript{136} This is known because Aspire teachers are hired only if they have the very same training and credentials as regular government school teachers. Aspire maintains this practice to demonstrate that their methods could be implemented by regular government school teachers. TFI teachers clearly have equal or higher social standing as government teachers because the former have graduated from college and are also required to know English (the latter is not often the case for government teachers).
change traditional educational and social processes at schools. These organizations also have heavy exposure to western influences and model some of their curriculum and classroom procedures around western practices. This western influence is reflected in the classroom behaviors of the NGO teachers that are documented throughout this chapter.

As Borooah and Iyer (2005) point out, “Although, the practice of ‘untouchability’ is illegal in India, punishable by law through the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of) Atrocities Act of 1989, the reality of life in India presents a different picture.” At the macroscopic level, Bhalotra and Zamora (2010) find that enrollment and attendance rates are much higher for high-caste Hindu students than the minority groups low-caste Hindus and Muslims. Furthermore, Jeffrey et al (2005) find that educational attainment did not necessarily lead to stable labor market outcomes for a number of low-caste young adults. Clearly, caste and class designations play a significant role in Indian social dynamics at the big-picture level.

Turning to the school environment itself, Nambissan (1996), studying the schooling of Dalit\(^{137}\) children in the 1990s, points to a number of studies which show that students descending from untouchable castes were treated much worse than those in higher-status social groups within schools. For example, Dalit students were, in multiple cases, forced to sit separately (sometimes outside of the classroom), not allowed to drink water, and not allowed to sing songs with the rest of the students. Most importantly, Dalit students were found to be excluded from learning certain more difficult concepts compared to higher-status students. They were also discouraged from pursuing additional years of schooling compared to their higher-status counterparts.

\(^{137}\) Those formerly belonging to the untouchable castes
These findings are highly parallel to how government teachers in my study reinforce that there are non-learning and learning students. However, in the government school classrooms I observed, students are not discriminated against based on ascribed social characteristics, as in the caste-based examples cited above, but instead on whether or not they appeared to be academically capable or not. Students were also never denied access to food, water, toilet use, seating, etc in any discriminatory way.

Despite all of these differences, the one similarity between the findings cited above and my own findings is that once the hierarchy was established (of non-learning versus learning students), it was treated as rigid and unchangeable, as if it were the same as an ascribed characteristic that had been revealed at an early age. I never observed teachers show any inclination towards changing a non-learning student into a learning student. I also did not observe any instances of a student talking back to or questioning a teacher in any way. Students that had been classified as non-learning believed themselves to be non-learning and treated discrimination against them as a normal occurrence. This universally-acknowledged rigidity in the non-learning/learning hierarchy by all parties involved may be a residual effect of India’s caste system of social organization.

**Discussion of empirical findings and conclusion**

As the evidence presented throughout this chapter shows, the mission of improving education in government schools is a clash or battle between the culture of learning within
government schools and the learning ideals that the agents of change, the NGOs, bring into these environments. TFI and Aspire, which operate within the premises of government schools, are sometimes able to win the culture battle, especially when their teachers have the students to themselves in a separate classroom. But even when operating in their own classroom, they are subject to the social forces of the school at large. The constant interruptions by other teachers or students, as well as the “Us ko nahi aata” (meaning “He/she cannot understand/learn”) mentality instilled in the students that some students can learn and others cannot, heavily complicates the learning process. The time-wasting described in this chapter was also studied and quantified by a research team in East Delhi government schools, finding that government teachers only spent 38% of scheduled instructional time in the classroom (Tooley & Dixon 2007). Using nationally representative data, Kremer et al (2005) found that only 45% of teachers were actively involved in teaching during unannounced visits. I find that government school culture and behavior not only interrupt the NGOs’ activities but sometimes also seeps its way into the behavior of some of the NGO teachers themselves. Some NGO teachers begin to relax, becoming less disciplined and mission-driven. They stop keeping order in the classroom, stop arriving at school punctually, and do not fight against the constant interruptions to their work.

Due to these behaviors and regular hindrances within government schools, examples of which are presented throughout this chapter, the odds appear to be heavily stacked against the NGOs and their teachers who venture into this environment. The strongest piece of evidence presented in this chapter pointing towards this barrier faced by the NGO teachers is simply the behavior of the students themselves. The instances of chaos in the classroom, students themselves saying "Mujhe nahi aata" (meaning "I do not understand" or "I can't learn"), and
students being unable to apply or recall knowledge that they have recently encountered\textsuperscript{138} happen in the NGO classrooms just as they do in the mainstream government ones. This evidence strongly suggests that the government school culture of learning that these students have encountered for years still operates within the NGO classrooms.

While the NGO teachers do exhibit some negative behaviors such as reaching school late or succumbing to interruptions to their teaching, their actions can clearly be differentiated from those of the mainstream government school teachers. These differences are pointed out in Box 5.3. Throughout the fieldwork for this dissertation, NGO teachers were not at any point observed to take the "Us ko nahi aata" perspective in any situation. They taught to all students equally. They also frequently used classroom management techniques that were meant to be alternatives to authoritarian management such as yelling or threatening to hit. My data suggest that the NGO teachers tend to think of learning and more specifically a learning environment differently than the government teachers conceptualize them. But despite these differences in the approaches of the respective types of teachers (NGO and government), the behavior of the students was uncannily similar. This is why I conclude that the government culture "wins" the culture war between these two groups: simply because there is no strong evidence to show that the observed NGO interventions are changing the mindsets of the students themselves. Box 5.4 demonstrates this outcome with NGO and government teachers and students.

SEF is different and does not fall victim to the same forces, simply because it operates at its own learning center, outside the confines of a government school. This is one of the most likely reasons for the differences between the SEF students and the TFI, Aspire, and mainstream

\textsuperscript{138} This is possibly not the fault of the individual students, but rather a student behavior that indicates problems within their learning environment and how they are taught.
government students. The SEF students also attend the very same type of government schools that TFI and Aspire students attend. The only difference is that SEF's intervention on those students occurs outside of the school itself whereas TFI and Aspire operate within the walls of those schools. While its students do still attend government schools where the same phenomena described above occur, at least the SEF learning center is a separate environment where there are no interruptions and where the SEF teacher can propagate his own culture of learning to the students. The observed behaviors of the students at the SEF learning center never resembled those of the TFI, Aspire, and mainstream government students.

Overall, government culture wins the culture battle against the NGOs. NGOs are able to implement small aspects of their own mission and vision, but on the whole, the government school culture embodied in the daily actions of teachers and students, as reviewed in the discussion above, appears to be too strong for a few NGO teachers to change. Furthermore, no adoption of NGO teacher behaviors were ever observed on the part of the government teachers. In other words, I found no evidence of spillover from NGO practices to mainstream government practices as a result of these interventions. The work of these NGOs is certainly well-intentioned and likely benefits at least a subset of their students, especially in intangible ways such as exposing them to new ways of thinking, speaking, and problem solving. Nevertheless, the culture battle is still being won by the more dominant government school culture. There is no evidence that emerged from data collection to suggest that NGOs will actually be able to change how an

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139 SEF students are not included in this part of the discussion because it operates at its own learning center outside of the government school itself, so I never observed SEF students within the government school classrooms that they attend during the day.

140 This applies only to TFI and Aspire in this case, being the two NGOs that operate within government schools.
entire school or cohort of students and teachers think about learning, even if the NGO model may be better (or at the very least contain some elements that are better).

Box 5.3 - In-school behavior comparison summary, NGO and government teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>NGO Teachers</th>
<th>Government Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favoritism/discrimination</td>
<td>None shown or behavior-based: Most NGO teachers treated all students equally and gave them equal attention. Sometimes, teachers will show some preference towards students who are better behaved.</td>
<td>Performance-based: Teachers give more attention to students who are known to be academically capable and able to learn well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Organic: NGO teachers take effort to create a healthy classroom environment in which everyone feels free and comfortable, also using creative classroom management techniques. They try not to be heavy handed whenever possible, and they never resort to hitting. They do raise their voices as needed, with occasional shouting. When chaos erupts in the classroom, they sometimes do not stop it.</td>
<td>Disciplinary: Government teachers maintain order in the classroom, sometimes using hitting (though this is declining in Delhi) and often shouting. Chaos rarely erupts with a government teacher present, and if it does, the teacher ends it right away by assuming a dominant position in the room and shouting for the commotion to stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table compares NGO and government teachers on selected in-school behaviors.
The upper diagram in this box illustrates the finding that NGO and government teachers’ observed behaviors put them into largely separate “cultures of learning,” with only a few behaviors being shared. The lower diagram shows that, relative to one another, there is no evidence to suggest that NGO (TFI and Aspire) students are different from mainstream government students. This is why the government culture is considered to be “winning” in the battle between the two.
Box 5.5 - Key findings of Chapter 5

- Government teachers believe that some students cannot learn, and therefore should not be taught to, propagating the "Us ko nahi aata" (उस को नहीं आता, meaning "this student cannot learn") culture and only teaching the brighter students. NGO teachers give equal attention to all students.

- Government teachers start class late in the classroom while NGO teachers are more efficient when possible. (Though some NGO teachers do also adopt the habit of starting class late).

- Government teachers create an atmosphere of discipline in the classroom, with the primary goal of having students write down content into their notebooks rather than gain a full understanding of the material. NGO teachers' classrooms are more organic and the teachers do make an effort to teach effectively.

- Some NGO teachers adopt certain government teacher behaviors such as arriving late, being absent, not checking student answers or following up with students, and deviating from the stated schedule.

Recommendations

As the evidence from this chapter shows, NGO teachers are not as effective as they would ideally be when they are put into the government school environment and pitted against the norms and culture of government schools (and broader social forces). On many fronts, the NGO loses because NGO teachers either become corrupted or are forced to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their mission (for example, tardiness, time wasting in school, substituting in empty classrooms and canceling their own remedial classes). Occasionally, the NGO is able to score a win. Some students certainly do benefit from these NGOs’ programming and from the extra effort put in by NGO teachers compared to government teachers. Until we have rigorous data from randomized controlled trials to compare with the qualitative data available, we will not
be sure of the magnitude and distribution across students of the positive work done by these NGOs.

Most importantly, NGOs and other change agents within education, in addition to delivering curriculum, need to target their work towards creating a culture shift to fight against both structural and psychological threats to their work. To address structural characteristics such as constant classroom interruptions or deviance from the stated schedule, NGOs can insist on working with their students according to a fixed timetable that is agreed upon by all members of the school (perhaps at a SMC meeting). Then NGO teachers would have the authority to pull students out of a lunch break that has spilled over too long or to start teaching at the very beginning of the school day. Right now, NGO teachers have to navigate these situations by themselves because no explicit agreement has been made by all parties involved about when an NGO teacher can or cannot step in. Another possible measure is for NGO teachers to create a “no-knock” policy for certain hours of the day during which nobody can bother them in their classroom. Similar to a “do not disturb” sign at a hotel, teachers would put a sign on the door kindly asking that nobody disturbs the room for certain instructional periods, with the hope that others in the school learn about and respect this policy over time.

Another very feasible step that NGOs could take is to prepare their teachers for the government school environment and the pressures they will face by incorporating it into the training that these teachers receive. A potential model for this could come from the workshop described by Schein (2010, p. 371, Case Example) in which employees from multiple units within a company come together to learn about the culture of the other groups. During its summer training for new fellows (teachers), TFI could offer sessions in which the new teachers
hear about the experience of working in a government school, read about the experiences of other teachers and how their capabilities and constraints shifted throughout the year, and learned what some of the research on NGO interventions says. They could also engage in role play activities to practice holding their ground when confronted with distractions or scenarios that deviate from their plan. Aspire could also conduct such training on an ongoing basis given the high level of weekly interaction between teachers, program managers, and organization leaders. NGOs could then evaluate their trainees on these skills.

Box 5.6 - Recommendations for education NGOs partnering with government schools

✓ Explicitly propagate a culture of learning that anyone can learn. Encourage government actors to adopt this view.
✓ Avoid distractions that are typical in government schools. Create a “no-knock” policy to keep the class focused during instruction
✓ Prepare teachers during training for the clash of cultures that they will encounter when they enter the school environment.
✓ Create a habit of reviewing student work in student notebooks or on exams so that students can see their mistakes and learn from them while also receiving positive reinforcement about work they did well.
Chapter 6. Beyond the NGO: “Scaling up” versus “scaling down”

Introduction

All three non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this study share an approach that they are trying to innovate and grow within the government school system in India. At the same time, India is a country in which not much is done well at scale. Healthcare is supposed to be affordable for the poor but newspapers are constantly reporting of government hospitals lined with patients waiting for days to be treated and sometimes being denied treatment. Many social services that are standard in the developed world do not exist yet in India, but there are NGOs and religious organizations that do this work in some communities. Due to the 2009 Right to Education Act, education is also supposed to be free nationwide for all 6-14 year-olds (MHRD 2014), but implementing this policy effectively at scale is a great challenge. Given all of these difficulties, it is important for this study to examine how each education NGO grows or intends to grow and draw out any useful theoretical or policy recommendations related to bringing education interventions to scale in a large Indian city.

While the previous two chapters look within the NGOs and within school environments at culture and interaction, this chapter includes dynamics within NGOs and schools in order to look at the environment beyond the three NGOs and beyond the individual school level. This chapter

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141 A search at the Times of India website for the terms “government hospital” and “hospital bed” revealed several recent articles, all pointing out that greater hospital and medical capacity in India is needed. For example, see Jha 2017, Iyer 2017, and Times of India 2017.
142 Such as child protective services.
examines the embeddedness and growth of the NGOs at the school level as well as in the broader
government infrastructure and education landscape. It then links these patterns of growth to
evidence on school-level processes. The concept of scalability is central to these processes, as is
the question of what growth means to each organization. The relationship of each NGO to the
government beyond the school level, meaning how representatives of each NGO interact and
manage their relationship with city-level school officials, is also important.

Chapter 4 shows that Teach for India (TFI) is very rigid in its organizational structure and
curriculum, while Aspire is more flexible, and SEF is even more flexible. Chapter 4 shows that
these levels of flexibility impact how each organization is able to run their programs at one
school. In this chapter, I look at how these levels of flexibility impact the scalability of each
organization. The concepts of “scaling up” and “scaling down” are central to this examination.
Scaling up simply means growing, getting bigger, and reaching more classrooms or students.
Scaling down means penetrating or gaining traction at the school level, such that an intervention
is useful to students and teachers, can sustainably continue, and becomes entrenched in the
day-to-day operations of the school. Scaling down is the same concept as the depth of
implementation in the words of Coburn (2003, p. 4). The following section defines key terms and
concepts used throughout this chapter while also presenting key literature on scalability.

There are three main components of this chapter that follow: First, how does each
organization’s intervention differ across the various schools in which it operates? Second,
looking at the broader environment in which these NGOs exist, how are these NGOs growing
and which factors affect their abilities to scale up their operations to more schools? Third, how
do these findings about scalability relate to sociological theory about collaboration between the
state and civil society? After presenting evidence and drawing empirical conclusions regarding these questions, I develop a framework for NGOs to use to decide how and when to scale up operations effectively, with special attention to being sufficiently scaled down first. I then end the chapter with consequences and recommendations for education NGOs.

In this chapter, I find that the following are key growth-enabling factors that allow NGOs to scale their educational interventions to more settings and schools:

A. **Complementarity at the administrative level only**: If an NGO’s work or intervention is mutually beneficial to both NGO administrators and government officials, this complementarity can foster growth in the intervention. This happens regardless of whether NGO and government program managers and headmasters at the managerial level or NGO and government teachers at the school level find the intervention to be mutually beneficial. Projects that are “quick wins,” in the words of one interviewee, meaning that they can quickly show promising results, are particularly complementary and growth-enabling.

B. **Embeddedness at the administrative level only**: If ties and interaction between NGO administrators and government officials are regularly maintained, this embeddedness can foster growth in the intervention. This happens regardless of whether NGO and government program managers at the managerial level or NGO and government teachers at the school level are socially embedded with one another.

C. **Being just sustainably (but not necessarily completely) scaled down**: For the NGOs studied in this dissertation to scale to more schools, it is not necessary for them to be so
successful, capable, and deeply entrenched -- at existing locations in which they operate -- that teachers and students have bought into their program. Rather, they merely need to be established enough in each existing location in which they operate such that their intervention is running stably and appears to be able to continue to run. To use the terminology of Coburn (2003), interventions merely need to achieve a modest level of sustainability rather than a great depth of intervention at each school in order for the interventions to be scaled up to more schools.

D. **Having independent funding:** NGOs which grew in size during the course of my fieldwork each have independent sources of funding. They are not receiving any funding from the government. As interviewees explained, government actors were happy to renew and scale up programs for which the government did not have to pay. While I did not focus on funding as part of my fieldwork, my evidence suggests that this may be a key growth factor nonetheless.

E. **Having high fidelity across schools:** NGOs whose interventions are structured very similarly in the various schools across which they work are in the best position to scale up. If one NGO’s intervention looks different across the schools in which it works, the program is less scalable.

F. **Having low human capital needs:** NGOs that can a) easily train and place their own teachers into schools, and b) have those teachers implement the intervention easily without much involvement of government school personnel or much supervision, appear to scale up more easily. NGOs that a) require more resources to train teachers, b) supervise them once they are implementing the NGO program in a government school,
and c) require heavier involvement of government personnel, appear to be hindered from scaling up as easily.

Based on these factors that were observed to impact scalability as well as evidence presented throughout this chapter, the most important conclusions of this chapter are as follows:

1. “Scaling up” (reaching more schools) and “scaling down” (penetrating within any one school) are not closely related phenomena. Being fully scaled down or achieving buy-in from government teachers and students (those being intervened upon) is not necessary for an intervention to scale to more schools.

2. NGOs can scale up regardless of the quality of their interventions, meaning that the aforementioned growth-enabling factors have to do with political situations, bureaucratic preferences, and organizational structure more than with learning outcomes for students.

3. Concepts like complementarity and embeddedness that determine potential for partnerships need to be examined at multiple organizational levels: administrative, managerial, and school. Relations at the higher, “administrative” level are found to have the most impact on scalability, as mentioned above and as evidence presented in the chapter shows.

The key findings from this chapter are also summarized in Box 6.12 at the end of this chapter.
Definitions and Literature

In addition to the literature review on public-private partnerships in Chapter 2, this section provides a briefer look at selected literature specifically on scaling and scalability of education interventions (and a few interventions from other fields). This section also includes definitions of many of the key concepts that are used throughout this chapter.

In simple terms, to scale or to scale up or scaling mean growing or getting bigger. More specifically, it means to take something that is already operating in a small setting and to spread it such that it is used more widely. There are many definitions of scaling from the education and public health literature, all of which are in agreement. For example, “‘Scaling up’ involves adapting an innovation successful in some local setting to effective usage in a wide range of contexts” (Clarke et al 2006) and “[Scaling up is] deliberate efforts to increase the impact of successfully tested health interventions so as to benefit more people and to foster policy and program development on a lasting basis” (Milat et al 2016). Likewise, scalability just means the ability of a program or intervention to scale up. From Milat et al (2016): “Scalability is the capacity of an individual intervention to be scaled up…”

For the NGOs in this study, scaling up can refer to a variety of processes or outcomes. All three NGOs want to scale\textsuperscript{143}. For them, scaling successfully is a matter of successfully

\textsuperscript{143} For TFI and Aspire, this is evident because both organizations already have a track record of pursuing growth, as detailed later in this chapter. For SEF, their ambitions to eventually scale up and spread their methods beyond their single learning center is known from an interview with one of the co-founders on February 27, 2015 and as revealed by their plans to begin a project in Kashmir (learned about during a field visit to the SEF learning center on September 14, 2015) and to operate their own school in Delhi in 2017 (learned about after the formal conclusion of fieldwork).
implementing their programs within more classrooms and schools, leading to permanent change in the learning experiences of the students. But scaling up as a concept does not inherently have anything to do with quality of an intervention (whereas scaling down and achieving depth have to do with quality). Both high and low-quality interventions can potentially scale up. Scaling also does not have to do with the content of the intervention. For example, leaders within the Aspire organization hope to broaden the remedial instruction they offer to include English language instruction (in addition to Hindi and math, which they already do). Adding English would not constitute the growth necessary to scale. For these NGOs and for the purposes of this chapter, scaling (or scaling up) means moving into a greater number of schools or catering to many more students at their existing schools. None of them can expect for their models or methods to be adopted system-wide at any time in the next decade or two. However, successful scaling for them could mean being in hundreds or even thousands of schools in multiple states in India with other organizations recognizing the value of and trying to imitate their work.

There is a growing literature on scalability and how to scale (for example, Milat et al 2016), but there are relatively few empirical examples or cases that actually examine whether educational organizations or interventions are able to successfully scale. Dearing (2009) points out that our professional and academic training systems habituate us to be concerned with whether or not programs work (and how to develop programs that work) rather than with whether they scale or diffuse. He gives the example that in American social work schools, none of the curriculum looks at scaling or diffusion; it only looks at the effectiveness of individual

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144 Aspire had already been experimenting with this on a small scale in the fall of 2015 during my research, but not in Aspire Schools A or B where I conducted most observation. Teachers from other Aspire schools also reported on this at the Aspire all-staff meeting I observed on October 10, 2015.
programs. This may be because scalability in education is much harder to accomplish and measure than it is in other fields. As Chris Dede (2015) explains,

"Other sectors of society find scaling up and sustaining innovation much less difficult. In medicine, interventions such as antibiotics or immunizations work uniformly regardless of the patient’s socioeconomic status, native language, prior academic history, race, ethnicity, etc., yet all of these factors greatly influence whether an instructional intervention will succeed or fail with a particular student."

Adelman and Taylor (2007) lay out four phases of "Prototype implementation and scale-up" for education interventions (quoted verbatim):

1. Creating readiness: Enhancing the climate/culture for change
2. Initial implementation: Adapting and phasing-in the prototype with well-designed guidance and support
3. Institutionalization: Ensuring the infrastructure maintains and enhances productive changes
4. Ongoing evolution

This framework is exhaustive and more than adequate in defining scaling up for the purposes of this chapter.

The concept of flexibility is also important to this chapter. An organization that is flexible can change readily and easily in the face of feedback, new demands from the community, change in school environment, etc. An organization that is not flexible will keep its model as it is no matter what. As shown in Chapter 4, SEF is the most flexible, Aspire is in the middle, and TFI is the least flexible of the three cases. SEF changes its plans very frequently whenever new curriculum is available or warranted, whereas TFI’s model stays almost exactly the same wherever it goes. While Aspire does not change its curriculum as much as SEF, it delivers it at a flexible speed to each group of students and has also shown that it can respond quickly to
feedback and requested changes from the community. The evidence presented later in this chapter helps us assess how the flexibility of an NGO’s programs impacts their scalability.

It is extremely important when scaling an intervention to determine the extent to which each individual instance of the intervention is succeeding. In other words, we must ask the following question: if we take an intervention that was successful in one school and scale it to 100 more schools, is it also operating successfully in all 100 of those locations? I refer to cases in which this does not happen as partial or incomplete scaling, meaning that the implementation of the intervention is not equally effective or appropriate in all settings. In the literature, aspects of this concept are also referred to as fidelity (Klein et al 2015) or scaling down (Heather Lewis as cited in Elmore 1996, p. 20). An intervention has high fidelity if it stays true to its originally conceived form in the various schools in which it operates. As noted in the previous section, high fidelity can come at the expense of adaptation to the setting\(^\text{145}\), so the two have to be balanced so that each instance of an intervention is appropriate for its setting. Of course, the social dynamics between NGO and government teachers addressed in the previous chapter play a huge role in how completely and effectively an intervention is scaled. Furthermore, there are no concrete

\(^{145}\) For example, Intervention X could operate in 100 schools and have high fidelity, meaning that if you were to walk into some of those 100 schools and observe, the intervention would look nearly identical in all of the schools. This means that all of the NGO teachers who operate Intervention X at all 100 schools would teach in the same way as each other, regardless of any differences that may exist between these 100 schools and the students that attend them. Maintaining high fidelity means that Intervention X will not adapt to specific characteristics of each of the 100 schools. In contrast to this, we can imagine Intervention Y which operates in 100 other schools and has low fidelity. This means that if you walked into some of those 100 schools to observe, the intervention would look different from school to school. This means that the various NGO teachers who operate Intervention Y in the 100 schools would teach in different ways from each other. Having low fidelity means that these differences can exist and that these differences may be the result of adaptations teachers have made in their own individual schools to cater Intervention Y to the needs of their own students. This is why there is a trade-off between fidelity and adaptation.
metrics to measure fidelity, especially in the case of smaller NGOs that do not collect rigorous data on themselves and their students.

An intervention that is scaled down is one that penetrates well at the school level, meaning that it is sustainable and effective for the students and teachers in that learning environment. Coburn (2003) presents a clear and useful definition of scaling down, which she refers to as deep change or depth. Coburn points out that when questions of scale are concerned, scholars of education interventions focus too much on measuring growth by numbers and tend to overlook the nature and quality of the intervention in schools. She argues that the nature of an intervention is what ultimately determines whether there will be a positive learning outcome for children, which is the critical end goal. She writes,

“[T]o be ‘at scale,’ reforms must effect deep and consequential change in classroom practice... By ‘deep change,’ I mean change that goes beyond surface structures or procedures (such as changes in materials, classroom organization, or the addition of specific activities) to alter teachers’ beliefs, norms of social interaction, and pedagogical principles as enacted in the curriculum.”

Essentially, Coburn is saying that deep change occurs when the teachers’ culture of learning, the topic of the previous chapter, has been altered. Another way to say this would be that deep change occurs when teachers buy into the intervention. I add to this that deep change also occurs when the culture of learning of the students has been altered, not just that of the teachers.\textsuperscript{146}

While Coburn refers to scaling up as spread and to scaling down as depth, in this chapter, I will simply use the terms scaling up and scaling down. Scaling down will be taken to have exactly the same definition as depth, as defined by Coburn above (while scaling up has already been

\textsuperscript{146} In Chapter 5, I find that the students perpetuate a school or NGO’s culture of learning just as much as the teachers do.
defined earlier in this section). An intervention that exists in multiple locations and does not have a high degree of fidelity or being scaled down can be called partially or incompletely scaled.

To be clear, scaling up and scaling down go hand-in-hand as two sides of the same coin: Scaling up means reaching more schools. Scaling down means establishing a reasonable depth of intervention at each of those schools such that beliefs and norms are affected. When we ask “Is this intervention capable of scaling up?” we are asking “Can this intervention be placed into new schools with new students and teachers who were not intervened upon before?” When we ask “Is this intervention capable of scaling down?” we are asking “When this intervention is placed into new schools with new students and teachers, to what extent, if at all, will those students and teachers buy into the intervention and become capable of implementing the intervention’s practices on their own in the present and future?” The two are completely different concepts but very related. As an intervention scales up to more schools, it also needs to scale down in each of those schools in order to be effective. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to both concepts in this chapter which considers the issue of scale and growth in these three NGO cases. The criteria I use to evaluate scale in the rest of this chapter is based on this grounding principle, established by Coburn as described above, that fidelity and scaling down must be taken into account in any scenario involving scaling up.

There are a few case studies or field experiments that demonstrate the difficulty of scaling up educational interventions while maintaining fidelity. For example, Fagin’s (2009) study of school principals shows that success depends not only on the organization that is intervening but also on the recipients of the intervention. The organization needs to provide support, but the model needs to be flexible enough to meet the specific needs of each school.
Fryer (2014) reports the results of an experiment meant to implement charter school practices in traditional public schools. He points out that even though the experiment had overall positive results, there were still many factors that reduced the fidelity of the intervention. These include the cost of scaling, how personnel are assessed, and labor supply. Obviously, when more money and more skilled teachers are available, the intervention will have more numerous and high-quality resources to ensure success. The intervention studied by Fryer also involved hiring tutors, who were supposed to be screened through a detailed testing process, but Fryer gives the example that those in charge can just take the easy way out and hire tutors with good letters of recommendation. This is an example of how corners can be cut when an intervention is scaling up. Pang et al (2015) present the case of an intervention in Singapore and find that teacher buy-in and their attitude towards an intervention is critical to its success.

It is important to note that most of the scholarship on the scaling of educational interventions comes from the developed world. And while this work is useful to research in the developing world, there are still differences in the settings that limit the extent to which one translates to the other. Theoretical models such as that from Adelman and Taylor (2007) are certainly applicable but many of the empirical examples come from elsewhere and may not apply as closely. For example, some of the experiments on educational scalability, such as the technological intervention in Clarke and Dede’s work (2009), do not appear to be common in the developing world and are not even feasible in some settings (where, for example, even charging the electronic equipment involved may not be feasible). Work from school-based settings in the developing world itself, as in Pappas et al (2008), usually look at a more specific and narrow issue than education as it is broadly approached in this dissertation. Pappas et al look at the
implementation of a school lunch program and its nutritional and health impact on the students. Likewise, there is other research with schools being involved in health interventions in the developing world, but relatively less is written about the scaling and implementation of interventions with educational outcomes as the goal.

**School-level implementation and fidelity**

This section addresses each NGO’s implementation strategy and attention to fidelity of their intervention within the various schools they enter. I use two questions posed by Klein et al (2015) related to incomplete scaling and adaptation as a starting point: “How do teachers implement the design in a way that helps maintain that balance between fidelity and adaptation? How much adaptation is permissible before the design is compromised?” For any given intervention, the answers to these questions are the key to determining if the intervention is scaling successfully. For the purposes of this chapter, I have reformulated these into the following two key questions help understand and assess the performance of each NGO (the following questions should be asked for each NGO separately):

1. How different or similar are the various instances of the intervention? In other words, what is the level of variation between each NGO’s intervention in the various schools in which it operates?
2. Regarding the differences and similarities (the level of variation) from Question #1:
   
   a. How is the level of variation from school to school beneficial to the operations of
      the NGO and its capacity to scale up?
   
   b. How is the level of variation from school to school detrimental to the operations
      of the NGO and its capacity to scale up?

For each NGO intervention, the answer to Question #1 tells us the fidelity of each NGO’s
intervention by asking how much variation there is between, for example, TFI’s program in
School A compared to in School B. Are all TFI teachers executing the TFI model in the same
way or is there variation? Then to answer Question #2, we must determine if the observed
variation (the answer to Question #1) is due to appropriate adaptation to each individual school
setting or if it is inappropriate or deviant in some way. Likewise, if an intervention is very similar
in every school, we have to question whether such similarity constitutes an appropriate
adherence to the intervention plan or if it is a lack of adaptation to the individual school
environments. This will also shed light on whether flexibility in an education NGO can be an
asset or liability. As Chapter 4 shows, Aspire is much more flexible than TFI in its planning and
curriculum, which makes it more effective in individual settings. But from a scalability
standpoint, the more flexible program may be harder to spread and sustain if it is not identical in
every setting. TFI is not meant to flex much whereas Aspire and SEF are meant to do so\(^\text{147}\). This
section determines the answers to these key questions for each NGO to understand how they

\(^{147}\) These differences in flexibility are made clear in Chapter 4 where structural characteristics of
the three interventions as well as observations about how they operate in practice are both
examined closely.
grow (or how they can expect to grow) and the trade-offs involved in doing so.

**Box 6.1 - Assessing Fidelity in NGOs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>TFI</th>
<th>Aspire</th>
<th>SEF (hypothetical)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Is the intervention the same in each setting?</td>
<td>Yes. Very low variation (except for the few teachers who electively put in extra work).</td>
<td>No. Adapts to the individual setting and then tries to implement remedial education within those confines.</td>
<td>Unlikely. SEF chooses curriculum and methods based on the particular community and students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a How are these similarities or differences (the answer to Question #1) beneficial for scale up?</td>
<td>The model is easy to replicate.</td>
<td>Students struggling the most can be targeted directly. NGO can help the school at large however needed.</td>
<td>Each student receives curriculum and instruction that is personalized to their own situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b How are these similarities or differences (the answer to Question #1) detrimental to scale up?</td>
<td>No way to address inequality in learning outcomes within the classroom.</td>
<td>The model is difficult to replicate and monitor.</td>
<td>Currently unclear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table summarizes the extent to which each intervention is similar across its various schools or settings (fidelity). It then addresses the question of whether similarities or difference across settings are positive or negative for each organization. In other words, this table answers questions 1, 2a, and 2b to the extent possible. Note that answers for SEF are hypothetical answers based on what is known about their program’s model and organization. True answers cannot be given for SEF because, at the time fieldwork was conducted, it was only operating in a single location in Delhi.

*Teach for India*

As Chapter 4 demonstrates, TFI’s model is meant to be as similar as possible in all settings, such that a TFI teacher can simply be plugged into a government classroom and take over without any major restructuring. In reality, there are certain aspects of this model that stay preserved from school to school and others that vary. Whereas the curriculum for Aspire and
SEF can vary drastically from school to school or student to student, TFI’s curriculum stays constant. Every TFI teacher uses the same curriculum that his or her government counterpart uses. In the Delhi TFI schools I studied, this means that all teachers teach from the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) textbooks for their particular grade level. A fifth grade TFI teacher is supposed to teach exactly the same material as the fifth grade government teacher in the neighboring classroom, except in English. In addition to the curriculum, TFI’s overall model stays the same from school to school. Their focus is on the students in TFI classrooms rather than on the whole school. This is best described as a school-within-school approach: TFI creates a separate school environment for its own students, complete with its own extracurricular activities both within and beyond the school. In every TFI school, the TFI teacher is tied to his or her classroom and students and rarely interacts with other school personnel. TFI teachers go about their business, government teachers go about their business, and the two groups leave each other alone. There is no priority to create any spillover or collaboration between these two types of teachers, even if they are doing exactly the same work. Like government teachers and unlike Aspire or SEF teachers, TFI teachers suffer from the syllabus problem, meaning they are required to cover NCERT material with their students at a particular pace so that all of the necessary curriculum is taught within each

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148 I did not observe any exceptions to this throughout my fieldwork with TFI. The only finding close to an exception came during an informal interview with a TFI teacher on February 14, 2015 who described how he takes the NCERT curriculum and modifies it into stories that are easier for the students to understand and remember. This teacher himself decided to put in the extra time and work needed to make these modifications. So this is an example in which a TFI intervention was adapted for a specific situation at the school level, but the only change was how exactly the content was delivered. The actual content itself was the same as in all other TFI and government classrooms.

149 As documented in Chapters 4 and 5, TFI was never observed to take initiative towards creating spillover to government school teachers in any of their Delhi operations.
semester. TFI teachers or Program Managers do not have the flexibility that Aspire personnel have to change their program or intervention at just one school. As a city-level TFI administrator told me in an interview\textsuperscript{150}, TFI has a contract with the school system and with the principal of each school. If the same upheaval that Aspire experienced\textsuperscript{151} were to happen in a TFI school (and the teacher was not at fault), TFI could simply point to the contract and enforce it or make smaller changes to what is happening at the classroom level. Furthermore, such upheaval is very unlikely because of how separate TFI and regular government operations are at any one school and because TFI teachers are already using the same curriculum. Another part of the TFI program that insulates it against resistance is that TFI students are supposed to spend their entire school careers in TFI classrooms. For example, this means that a student in a sixth grade Delhi TFI classroom likely also had a TFI teacher in grades 1-5 (there is no kindergarten)\textsuperscript{152}. This insulation from resistance from parents and teachers allows TFI’s program model to stay the same from school to school without changing.

The details above all indicate that the answer to Question #1 for TFI is that TFI has a low level of variation from school to school. Since TFI does not visibly prioritize integration of its teachers into government schools or adaptation of their intervention to school-specific characteristics, any variations in the TFI model appear to be much more subtle than in Aspire’s, in which teachers are required to integrate. Nevertheless, there is also some noteworthy variation within TFI interventions across classrooms and schools. Much of this stems from the relatively

\textsuperscript{150} On October 10, 2015.
\textsuperscript{151} In the incident at Aspire School A in which parents rebelled against the intervention, as described in Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{152} This is a structural characteristic of the TFI program and no exceptions to this were observed.
less monitoring that TFI management does\(^\text{153}\). So even though TFI’s model is rigid, within that model, TFI teachers operate on their own, separate from the rest of the TFI organization, with more autonomy than Aspire teachers.

Unlike Aspire teachers, TFI teachers work on the exact same schedule as government teachers. They are supposed come at the start of the school day and leave at the end. Beyond these five hours, their time is their own\(^\text{154}\). For Aspire teachers, even if the nature of their work in school could vary more than for TFI teachers, their working hours were fixed and enforced\(^\text{155}\). Beyond attending school, Aspire teachers go to the central office multiple times each week for grading, lesson planning, looking at student records, and meeting with managers.

Teacher attendance also appeared to vary heavily in TFI. It was common for me to arrive at school one day and learn that one of the two teachers of a classroom was not there\(^\text{156}\). There were also many TFI classrooms that were assigned two TFI teachers, but one would leave the program during the school year, leaving their co-teacher behind to teach the entire class. In some cases when a teacher had left, three teachers would decide to work together to cover two

\(^{153}\) Documented in Chapter 4.

\(^{154}\) Whereas Aspire teachers go into the central office after school hours and often come in on holidays when TFI and regular government teachers can stay home. No instances were observed in which a TFI teacher stayed behind at school (or went to another centralized location where there were other teachers) after school hours to do additional work, planning, or collaboration.

\(^{155}\) As shown in Chapter 4, since Aspire teachers were required to go to the main Aspire office after school on many days (as part of their pre-determined job requirements, not on an ad-hoc basis), program managers and other staff could easily keep track of teacher activity.

\(^{156}\) While I do not have rigorous attendance data, at least one TFI teacher was missing from TFI the TFI schools that I visited on the following dates. TFI School A: September 15, 2015, October 1, 2015, October 2, 2015, October 5, 2015, and December 9, 2015. TFI School B: March 11, 2015, October 7, 2015, and December 7, 2015 (two teachers absent for entire week). One teacher had also dropped out of TFI School A and another from TFI School B in the first semester of 2015 and had not been replaced, leaving their co-teachers to teach 60 children alone. Their absences are not included in the dates listed here (meaning that at least one other teacher was absent on all of these days).
classrooms as a team. Aspire’s intervention in each school would not be disrupted by a teacher leaving mid-year because the intervention is a supplement to the students’ regular instruction (meaning that the departure of an Aspire teacher would not result in a student’s regular classroom teacher disappearing). Volunteers were often involved in filling in gaps left by TFI teachers, sometimes even teaching classes on their own for part or all of the day.

As mentioned before, all TFI teachers are supposed to teach and interact with their students in English. However, many teachers, at times, were observed to speak in Hindi with their students, especially in one-on-one interactions. This usually allows the students to grasp a concept better and better understand what the teacher is saying. In my observations, a number of students in each classroom, even at the older ages in grades 6-8, were still not proficient in English. So speaking in Hindi was often a way to cater to all students more equally. Teachers who did this told me that they understand the reason for the TFI policy but it was not always the best strategy and they were willing to violate it sometimes.

The answer to Question #2 above, regarding how TFI’s similarities and differences across schools are beneficial or detrimental for TFI’s operations to operate at its current scale and grow even more, is straightforward: the rigidity of the model makes it simpler to scale up but fails to insulate TFI students (the recipients of the intervention) from differences in teaching quality and teacher attendance that may occur. The reason for this is that despite using the exact same

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157 This was the case at TFI School A throughout my observations in the fall of 2015 and winter of 2015-16. Three teachers were running two classrooms because one teacher had dropped out of the program and had not been replaced. Volunteers were also often plugged into these classes, as documented in Chapter 4.
158 Volunteers were observed to be used in this capacity at TFI Schools A on October 9, 2015 and December 9, 2015; and TFI School B on December 7, 2015.
159 Told to me in informal interviews with TFI teachers on February 14, 2015 and December 14, 2015.
curriculum and schedule of government schools, TFI uses a loose management structure\textsuperscript{160}. Therefore, some teachers could be speaking in English while others are speaking in Hindi. Some may put in a great deal of time outside of school into preparing to teach and reviewing student work while others do not. The loose management structure means that TFI program managers, who only see their teachers sparingly each month, may not be as aware of these differences and do not have the ability to correct for them. TFI’s written, on-paper characteristics at each school are very similar from school to school. More subtle, unwritten characteristics may differ, as in the few examples above, but these can only be discovered through additional research on teachers.

\textit{Aspire}

One of the first items the founder of Aspire brought up about his approach to working in government schools is that their number one goal is to “be there” in a supportive way for the schools in whatever capacity the school needs\textsuperscript{161}. The goal is to form a partnership in collaboration with government school personnel and get everyone on the same side. Then Aspire can integrate some of their own ideals about education into the partnership. The key strategy is to teach remedial education with the eventual goal of the school personnel being involved in this process (and potentially even running it themselves), but the organization is prepared to do anything else that is constructive and might curry favor with school teachers and leaders. For example, Aspire teachers are often asked to fill in for absent government teachers rather than teach remedial students (in which case the remedial students, who Aspire is supposed to be

\textsuperscript{160} Discussed extensively in Chapter 4. \\
\textsuperscript{161} Interview on January 11, 2015.
teaching, would just stay in their usual classrooms rather than being pulled out to work with Aspire. Even though this is not part of the job of Aspire teachers, they always agree to help when they are asked. Aspire teachers often complained about this particular “duty,” explaining that it was a hindrance to their primary work. This is an example of the all-out approach that Aspire teachers took towards helping their schools. By contrast, I never once observed a TFI teacher doing anything of this nature for the rest of the school in which they worked. The example of the curriculum change demanded at Aspire School A in Chapter 4 and Aspire’s immediate action to change their programming at that school is another example of Aspire’s willingness to do as much as possible for their schools. While TFI teachers may often be very devoted to and willing to go all-out for their students, there is no evidence to suggest that such a full-program transformation within a school would ever happen in or be a part of the TFI program.

The consequence of this culture of adaptation and immersion in the school is the answer to Question #1 for Aspire: There is clear heterogeneity in Aspire’s interventions across schools. When I observed Aspire’s intervention in Aspire School A, I saw NGO teachers spending most of their time along with government teachers and trying to help out and plan with them as much as possible. I even observed some friendships between NGO and younger government teachers. In Aspire School B, I saw Aspire teachers who teach remedial classes with rotating groups of students and cordial interaction but not collaboration or friendship between the NGO and government personnel. Aspire teachers at Aspire School B also often step in for absent

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162 Observed during an Aspire all-staff meeting on October 10, 2015 and reported to me often in informal interactions with Aspire teachers and program managers.
government teachers as needed (at the expense of teaching their own remedial classes). In both cases, the teachers are well-immersed in the school, but their actual work and relationships at the school take different forms. So even though the teachers are mentored and monitored heavily by Aspire, the intervention can look quite different across its various instances.

This brings us to Question #2: are these differences between Aspire schools reasonable adaptations to each school’s context and unique characteristics in a way that is beneficial to the intervention, or are they deviant in some way? Since Aspire’s management is heavily attuned to what its teachers are doing and are involved in making decisions that impact the intervention at any given school, they are unlikely to make fundamental changes that are not in the best interest of the individual school. In the case of the change in Aspire School A, parents and teachers at the school demanded that Aspire change its methods, so Aspire worked together with them to come up with an alternate model that worked. This involved a very complicated and time-consuming negotiation with all parties involved, one that Aspire may not have been able to handle easily if they had hundreds of other schools in which to also administer their intervention, instead of the 18 that they had in Delhi during my fieldwork. In other Aspire schools where there have not been any big controversies, management still gives plenty of attention to what is happening on a regular basis and takes measures to customize its work to the

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163 Reported as a big problem by many teachers at Aspire’s all-staff meeting on October 10, 2015 and explained to me as a problem during a central office visit by a senior Aspire administrator on October 3, 2015.
164 Aspire’s management is able to do this partly because Aspire teachers meet with them regularly each week at the central office.
165 The evidence for this is the Aspire School A incident described in Chapter 4 in which Aspire management, in consultation with parents and teachers (of both kinds), decided to completely change their intervention model at this school.
166 I learned about this negotiation in an office visit with a senior Aspire administrator on October 3, 2015 and from a teacher at Aspire School A on October 13, 2015.
school’s specific needs, especially with regards to the speed and content with which the students are taught.\footnote{For example, on visits to the Aspire office on October 3, 2015 and October 21, 2015, I observed senior management going through student work with their teachers to decide what to teach to students in the following few days.}

To truly determine whether this heterogeneity from school to school is beneficial to Aspire’s work, we would ideally have student outcome data from both Aspire and control students. In the absence of that, the observed qualitative evidence all suggests that Aspire’s heterogeneity is a beneficial adaptation to each individual setting that better helps the intervention meet the needs of the recipients. However, a detrimental aspect of this is that adapting to each individual school requires extra work for the organization, meaning that it would be hard or even impossible to maintain the current level of attention to each school if there were many more schools in which Aspire were operating.

Simple Education Foundation

SEF does not have multiple instances of its intervention to compare to one another. SEF in Delhi, at the time of my fieldwork, was a one-room operation and was by far the smallest of the NGO cases studied in this dissertation. However, the case of SEF does provide valuable analytic leverage due to its more complicated and flexible pedagogy and its hard-to-replicate leadership.\footnote{As detailed in Chapters 3 and 4.} SEF is an example of an organization that has operated successfully for about two years and is poised to scale. It is important to assess which elements of its current learning center it will be able to replicate elsewhere.

The main way that curriculum and everyday teaching processes are currently decided at
SEF is that the teacher will consider the needs and progress of the students and choose projects for them to do for the upcoming month or two. These plans can change at the last minute. For example, while my fieldwork at SEF was in progress, a computer scientist, who also had a background in teaching basic coding (computer programming), visited the SEF learning center. As a result of this visit and accompanying interaction with the SEF teacher (also a co-founder of the organization), the teacher decided that SEF students would learn coding for one month\textsuperscript{169}. This month of learning coding was later extended to two months by the teacher to give students more time to do their projects. SEF appears to be special and effective\textsuperscript{170} because of this level of customization. The teacher can change the plan at the last minute in order to maximize learning outcomes for his students. This requires the teacher to be extremely dedicated, creative, and in-tune with the students. If a random TFI or Aspire teacher were to replace the SEF teacher, they would likely not be able to succeed\textsuperscript{171}.

Furthermore, if the current SEF teacher were to be cloned into others who would run new SEF interventions, all of the interventions would likely be successful, but they would all look very different, since each of those teachers would get to know his students and their community.

\textsuperscript{169} I observed the visit of this computer scientist to SEF on November 17, 2015. I also observed on a subsequent visit on November 28, 2015 that the teacher was preparing for his students to learn coding by trying out the online educational activities on his own (in his free time when his students work working independently).

\textsuperscript{170} While I do not have any quantitative data available to judge the effectiveness of the cases used in this dissertation, qualitative evidence presented in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that SEF is particularly effective in providing supplemental education to its students. For example, SEF students ask more thoughtful questions, speak better English, and work better in teams than all other groups of students that I observed during my fieldwork.

\textsuperscript{171} Although it is possible that the students would be able to train the new teacher since they, the students, would have been doing this for many months. But even if students could train new teachers, it would not help the model scale unless one were to take students from the current SEF location and put them in one of the new locations.
and choose pedagogy accordingly. So given the likely inability to train other teachers to educate
in the same way, it appears that SEF would have difficulty scaling up their current Delhi model.
However, towards the end of my fieldwork, SEF was in fact in the process of exploring such
opportunities, as discussed in the following section. The main point of these observations is that
while SEF’s intervention is highly flexible and scaled down to the point that students have fully
adopted its main principles, these characteristics are due to the unique talent (human capital) of a
single educator. Training or finding additional educators with the same level of talent would be
extremely difficult and costly. Therefore, SEF’s intervention is unlikely to scale up.

Given the details above and that SEF only exists in one location at the time of writing, I
can only venture to give hypothetical answers to Questions #1 and #2. The answer to Question
#1, which in this case would ask if SEF interventions vary from instance to instance, would be
that they most certainly would. Their entire pedagogic approach, as shown throughout this
dissertation, features heavy adaptation to the local community and to the learning level of the
students. Question #2 would ask if the differences from instance to instance of the intervention
would be beneficial adaptations or detrimental deviations from the baseline model. This question
is more difficult to answer because there currently is no baseline model for SEF. As the teacher
and co-founder himself explained in an interview, he considers SEF to still be in the process of
honoring an approach to teaching that has not yet been perfected. Last-minute curriculum changes
such as the one described above are further evidence of this. Once SEF does settle on a model
that can potentially be scaled, Question #2 would have to be re-evaluated. For now, we can
hypothesize that any variation would be due to adaptations that make the curriculum more

\(^{172}\) On February 27, 2015 at the SEF learning center.
customized and therefore more effective in terms of learning outcomes for each group of students. Such adaptations would be useful (because they would be catered towards each unique group of students), but likely hard to maintain and manage at larger scale. For the time being, SEF is waiting to scale its learning center model and the evidence suggests that replicating this model, as it was practiced at their learning center during my fieldwork, would be nearly impossible.

**NGO growth and potential for scaling up**

While the previous section examines the fidelity across multiple instances of these interventions at the school level itself, this section looks beyond the school level at each NGO’s position in the broader setting of the Delhi government school system and beyond. It also looks at the recent history of the scaling of each NGO and their plans and prospects for the near future. Since none of these organizations appear to be successfully causing any adoption of new practices by government personnel\(^\text{173}\), they are all reaching a point of sustainability in each school that allows them to consider scaling up to more settings. This section addresses Teach for India’s gradual annual growth since its founding, Aspire’s gradual growth in Delhi and rapid impending expansion into Odisha, and SEFs minor growth in Delhi and upcoming project in Kashmir. Box 6.2 also summarizes this recent and planned growth for each NGO.

\(^{173}\) As demonstrated in Chapter 5: NGO and government school “cultures of learning” are distinct from one another. There was no observed evidence of any spillover from the NGO teachers’ culture or practices into the government teachers’ behaviors.
For this section, it is important to keep in mind the following definitions that are included in the literature review in Chapter 2. Peter Evans identifies the following three concepts:

- **Complementarity**: “mutually supportive relations between public and private actors” (Evans 1996), also taken to mean when public and private actors desire to work together or when collaboration stands to be beneficial for both sides.

- **Embeddedness**: “ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide” (Evans 1996).

- **(State) Autonomy**: when the state is able to act separately from any private elites, other private actors, and non-state interests (Evans 1995).

**Box 6.2 - Growth plans for the near future (as of January 2016 unless otherwise noted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teach for India</strong></th>
<th>Already in many cities, expanding at the rate of about one new city per year, regular growth in existing cities as well, only limited by funding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspire</strong></td>
<td>Slow expansion in Delhi (pilot in 1 school, first year launch in 8 schools, second year in 18 schools plus massive 1,000 school expansion into Odisha launching soon).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simple Education Foundation</strong></td>
<td>No expansion in Delhi to date. Plans to launch 50-school project in Kashmir in 2016-17 school year. Plans to take over and operate a government school in Delhi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teach for India**

Since its founding, TFI has expanded to approximately one new city every year. Its

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174 More precisely, in 2009, TFI was in one city, 34 schools, had 87 teachers, and 2,731 students. In 2015 TFI was in seven cities, 331 schools, had 1,104 teachers, and 37,920 students (Teach For India 2016, p. 22).

175 Learned during interview with the Aspire founder on January 11, 2015.

176 Learned at the Aspire all-staff meeting on October 10, 2015 and discussed in numerous subsequent interactions with Aspire personnel.

177 Learned during observation at SEF on September 14, 2015 and discussed repeatedly in subsequent interactions with the SEF teacher and co-founder.
number of schools in each city is also growing. As described in the previous section, TFI can spread their intervention to new schools fairly easily by just replacing government school teachers with their own teachers. No restructuring at the school is needed. When spreading to a new school, TFI’s goal is to work with the youngest students possible and then provide those same students with TFI teachers for the rest of their school careers. TFI takes a very systematic approach to managing their relationship with the government school system. They sign an MOU (memorandum of understanding) with the government, which is a contract allowing TFI to work in particular government schools. Then members of the Delhi TFI Government Relations Team have to go to the various schools in the contract and get the principals to agree and sign off on the plan, sometimes having to argue with them in order to convince them.

None or very little of the funding for TFI in Delhi comes from the government. Rather, it is funded by private corporations and donations178. The climate for corporate involvement in education-related public service is now more ripe than ever due the Companies Act of 2013 in India, which came into effect in 2014 and requires corporations above a threshold size to donate 2% of their profits towards corporate social responsibility (CSR)(Ministry of Corporate Affairs 2013, p. 87). A TFI administrator revealed in an interview that TFI is trying to negotiate with the government to fund TFI classrooms, since the government should have available the funds that would otherwise have been used to pay government teachers to teach in those same classrooms. If the government were to start funding TFI, the model would be more like a standard

178 Told to me by a Delhi city-level TFI administrator on October 10, 2015 in an interview. TFI documentation states that in 2015-16, 2% of TFI’s funding does come from the government while 72% comes from companies, 13% from foundations, 8% from individuals, and 5% from trusts (Teach For India 2016, p. 26). This TFI documentation pertains to the funding for TFI’s entire organization whereas the interviewee was speaking just about Delhi, so it is possible that TFI’s government funds are only used in other TFI cities.
public-private partnership (PPP), like the American charter school model, and TFI could scale much more quickly, assuming there was governmental will to do so.

Funding appears to be the main constraint to TFI’s growth and they have not been able to secure government funding so far (in Delhi). I was told by multiple actors within the school system during my fieldwork that if you have your own, independent funding, it is not hard to get into one or more government schools to do an intervention. Codecasa and Ponzini (2011) and Bovaird (2004) also find that the government may turn to private parties when there is a need for extra funding. As long as the funding is coming from a non-governmental source, the complementarity between TFI and the government stays high. This was corroborated to me by the same TFI administrator who explained that government officials are happy to have TFI in their schools as long as the money is coming from elsewhere.

One TFI administrator explained in an interview that government officers are most interested in “quick wins,” meaning they tend to approve initiatives which are likely to work well and show positive results quickly. This allows them to add to their own resumes and increase the chances of getting better jobs and promotions within the government in the near future. Right now, bringing TFI into more schools is a quick win for government officials because it brings a well-reputed program into schools at no cost to the government. The Aspire founder, in an interview, also described government officials as being highly worried about funds, their reputation, and many other things. He explained that once he demonstrated that he had funding of his own and that he would not harm their reputations (which he again stressed to me that they

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179 Learned from an interview with a city-level TFI administrator on October 10, 2015.
180 Learned during informal, undocumented conversations throughout my fieldwork. I was never told any exception to this by a non-governmental actor.
181 Learned from an interview with a city-level TFI administrator on May 5, 2015.
were extremely worried about), they allowed him to initiate his intervention on a small scale.\textsuperscript{182} Note that while Patrinos et al (2009) and Grimsey and Lewis (2002) find that PPPs can transfer financial risk from the public sector to the private sector, the case of education is different because 1) outcomes are not measured financially (even though more cost efficient programs are, in general, preferred) and 2) there is still high risk to the government that the partnering education NGO will do a bad job and reflect poorly on the government, who brought in the NGO in the first place.

The key point appears to be that programs such as TFI are useful to those working in government when they work well and make everyone involved look good. This is definitely the case for TFI, which has a very positive reputation and continues to receive both permission and enough funding to gradually expand. This legitimacy, coupled with a model that is easy to replicate, gives TFI high scalability. TFI teachers are trained at summer institutes and then plugged into government school classrooms. They then participate in the TFI framework just as described in the rest of this dissertation without much variation. This is separate from what a new Aspire teacher does. Aspire does not have massive numbers of teachers leaving and entering the program each year like TFI, whose teachers just work for two years. Aspire teachers learn about the program and their specific school in a more targeted way. Some teachers have been there from the beginning, meaning they would have been with Aspire for 2.5 years at the time my fieldwork ended, while others stay just for one year.

It is very difficult to judge the level of embeddedness of TFI members within the government. As Evans (1996) explains, high embeddedness between the state and civil society

\textsuperscript{182} Interview on January 11, 2015.
actors can foster collaboration between the two. But to be more practical, what I find is that embeddedness can also lead to corruption. Before conducting fieldwork with these three NGOs, I visited and interviewed leaders of a number of other education NGOs, some of whom have received funding from the government for educational projects. In most cases, these other NGOs do not operate within schools themselves, but provide some other type of supplemental education (similar to that of SEF but with more narrowly focused curriculum). Many of these organizations had experienced some form of corruption. For example, Anirudh, now the CEO of a successful education NGO, explained that when he was first beginning his career in education, he had a neighbor who was a member of the Delhi government. When the neighbor learned that Anirudh did work related to NGOs, the neighbor told Anirudh that he could give Anirudh a large amount of funding that he had access to in order to fund Anirudh’s NGO. But then he told Anirudh that he would want the majority of that money to be returned to him. Basically, he wanted to use Anirudh to launder most of the money so that he could embezzle it. Anirudh refused this offer, but I have been assured by multiple people I interviewed that there are numerous people who do accept such offers.

Interestingly, while Klijn and Teisman (2003) remind us that in some PPPs it is the public partner’s goal is to deliver a service and the private partner’s goal to make money, in this educational setting, it is the opposite in some of these examples: the private entity (the NGO in this case) often does want to deliver a service while the public (governmental) entity may be corrupt and after money.

India has been making progress towards reducing corruption and keeping track of as

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183 In an informal interview in December 2014.
much money as possible. India is well known as a country with rampant tax evasion. Many transactions, even large ones, occur in cash. This allows income and revenue to go un-tracked and then nobody will notice if tax is not paid. Depending on how it is calculated, only approximately 1 to 7% of Indians file income tax returns\textsuperscript{184}. A report by Parakh (2017) also explains how many businesses avoid paying income tax. Transactions such as real estate sales would often be partially conducted in “black money” (a practice which likely continues), meaning cash that is not in banks and cannot be traced.

In November 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that all 500 and 1000 rupee notes in India would become invalid at the end of the year (worth approximately $7.50 and $15 at the time of writing, respectively). These notes had to be deposited at the bank or exchanged for newly printed notes before a deadline, after which they would be invalid. There was a shortage of new notes and many smaller merchants who never previously accepted electronic payments were observed to accept payment via PayTM, a smartphone software for sending money from user to user, paying bills, buying cell phone balance, and other shopping. Debit and credit card use in stores appears to be less common, but many stores do also accept them and this number will only increase. This so-called “demonetization” move was meant to flush out as much “black money” as possible from the economy\textsuperscript{185}.

\textsuperscript{184} According to the Income Tax Department (2016) in a report, only 39.1 million tax returns were filed for the 2014-15 assessment year (section 1). The same report states that 18.5 million of these returns came with zero tax payment (p. 19, the number of returns in the “= 0” range). Chancel and Piketty (2017) calculate that just over 6% of the adult population has paid taxes in India in recent years.

\textsuperscript{185} Note that while the motivation behind this new policy is seemingly positive, there has also been criticism that the logistics behind implementing it were unjust and problematic for the poor in India.
Directly related to schools, all government school students now have bank accounts\textsuperscript{186}. The paperwork related to these accounts happens in the schools themselves. In Delhi (and many other states), the poorer students receive a conditional cash transfer if they attend school\textsuperscript{187}. Students also receive free mid-day meals. In the past, there may have been more opportunities for teachers to steal some of the money meant for these initiatives. But now much more of this money is tracked electronically. These changes, both at the economy-wide level and at the school level, will be positive for education funding and accountability.

Another form of corruption is in the use of durable goods that the government may give to NGOs. I interviewed the CEO of another NGO which runs multiple learning centers funded by the government\textsuperscript{188}. He explained that small forms of corruption continue to happen. He told me the story that once his organization had received vehicles as part of government funding to allow them to transport students and materials. But even though these vehicles were meant for the exclusive use of the NGO, government employees, without even giving any advance warning, would approach the teachers and demand that they be allowed to use the vehicles for many hours. This hindered the NGOs operations on numerous occasions and is another form of corruption.

The examples above simply show that for any NGO, while embeddedness may have benefits for starting and maintaining a governmental partnership, it also has potential hazards. However, at the same time, there now exist, more than ever before, mechanisms to combat these hazards. The consequences of increased embeddedness for TFI and the government are unclear.

\textsuperscript{186} I never observed any exceptions to this or learn of any situations in which a government school student did not have a bank account.

\textsuperscript{187} No exceptions to this procedure were observed.

\textsuperscript{188} On February 17, 2015.
Right now their relationship is quite professional and governed by MOUs that are periodically renegotiated. I never saw any instances of corruption myself that related to the NGO-government relationship (of course the bulk of my time was at schools rather than with administrators).

_Aspire_

Aspire was much smaller in size than TFI but was catching up quickly at the conclusion of my fieldwork. After launching in Delhi approximately two years before the end of my fieldwork, Aspire has grown to reach 18 schools in Delhi alone\(^{189}\). Due to its immersive strategy, Aspire requires more resources than TFI to reach each additional school. Aspire administrators and managers need to carefully mentor the teachers who are first entering a school. This team of Aspire personnel conduct community-building activities so as to make the teachers immersed in the school and make it clear to all stakeholders involved that Aspire is going to be supportive of the school. Even though government teachers are not observed to adopt any Aspire practices, the goal is still to serve the whole school in multiple ways rather than just a subset of students. Aspire also needs to gauge if its curriculum is appropriate for each new group of students and make adjustments accordingly, whereas TFI teachers are supposed to follow the NCERT syllabus without making any modifications.

Aspire’s administration is quite accessible and nimble. As a result, I had more interactions with Aspire administrators and managers compared to how many I had with those in TFI. The former come to schools much more often to check on or support teachers, meet

\(^{189}\) During the 2015-16 school year, when the majority of fieldwork occurred
principals, and attend special events (like the Children’s Festival). So the marginal cost that Aspire needs to expend to add another school appears to be substantially higher than it is for TFI.

Aspire’s funding comes from private foundations through grants. They never mentioned attempting to find funding through governmental channels. They do carefully send reports and photographs to the granting foundations multiple times each year so that the foundation sees that there is progress and good work being done\(^{190}\). This increases the chances of continued funding going forward. Government school officials also periodically call upon Aspire to report on their work either through reports or meetings\(^{191}\). But there is no connection between the funder and the government when it comes to Aspire’s work, to the extent that I am aware. Aspire keeps very good documentation of everything it does, specifically to make reporting as straightforward and transparent as possible.

Beyond the 18 schools in Delhi in which it works, Aspire is also in the process of beginning a very large project in the state of Odisha with approximately 1000 schools. For this, they plan to take their Delhi model and abbreviate it such that it can reach a number of schools quickly. Once the intervention is implemented, Aspire will likely be in more schools than TFI but still may not require as large of an administrative structure or workforce since it will still only be operating in two states and will not be putting a teacher in every single school all the time, instead hoping that school personnel and community volunteers can help run the program. My exposure to the Odisha project has been limited to a presentation given by the Aspire founder to the rest of the organization at an all-staff meeting and informal interactions with Aspire

\(^{190}\) I observed a report being put together to send to a funding organization during an office visit on November 30, 2015.

\(^{191}\) Explained to me in an informal interview with the Aspire founder on January 11, 2015.
administrators. How the plan actually manifests itself in Odisha is yet to be seen, but it is important to note this very large jump that Aspire is poised to make in the scale of its operations.

As with TFI, government school officials are open to having Aspire work in their schools as long as the funding is external. At first, the government wanted to see a demonstration in a short one-school pilot that the program would be useful. After that, as long as results continue to be decent and Aspire sends reports and attends meetings, the government is favorable to having Aspire continue its work. Therefore, in its current formulation, Aspire’s intervention also has high complementarity to the government’s goals. To use Evans’s language, the relations between the NGO and the government are mutually supportive, in this case. Complementarity can also refer to a situation in which the government and civil society do behaviors that complement or support one another (Evans 1996). For example, the government could start a messaging campaign to garner public support for educational innovation. This would be complementary to Aspire’s work. But in the case of interventions like Aspire’s, the complementarity is much more passive.

To the extent that my data show, Aspire’s level of embeddedness with the government bureaucracy does not go beyond the professional relationship described above. And again, if the government system were more embedded in civil society or specifically with Aspire, it is not clear if this would lead to better collaboration outcomes, simply because the potential for corruption would be increased.

*Simple Education Foundation*

SEF has just one learning center in Delhi which uses very creative learning techniques.
SEF has vowed not to compromise on quality when it comes to opening more learning centers. Towards the end of my fieldwork, an opportunity emerged for SEF to work in government schools in Kashmir. According to one of SEF’s co-founders, a new official within the government of Kashmir wanted to see improved test scores and decided that enlisting the help of an NGO was the best way to do it. He was referred to SEF and recruited them to work on this initiative. This is a very different start to working with the government than that experienced by TFI or Aspire, who deliberately went to the government to propose their interventions.

SEF’s Kashmir project was scheduled to launch in May of 2017 and will focus on training and mentoring two English teachers per school in approximately 50 schools (exact start date and number were undecided). This Kashmir intervention will be extremely different from that in Delhi. It will likely take just a few Delhi methods and adapt them, but many will also be completely new. For example, they will not see every teacher (that they are training) every day. And there will be no direct contact with students. About 15-20 interns will also be integral to running the program, along with permanent program managers. This shows that in many ways, NGOs may often prioritize scaling and gaining experience over doing the same thing over and over again. Most of the Kashmir project will be funded by the government, while SEF is conducting fundraising to secure the rest. This fundraising will consist of donations rather than grants. This is another big difference between SEF and TFI and Aspire. The latter two, while larger and older, both have had to secure 100% of their funding on their own, whereas SEF was recruited to do their work and the government is willing to pay for most of it (SEF does need to do a little bit of fundraising to fund the rest).

Between the end of my fieldwork and the time of writing, SEF has come upon the
opportunity to run an entire government school in Delhi itself, beginning in April 2017. At this school, SEF will be able to implement its learning center model on the entire school day and school life of its students. So even though SEF has not proactively looked for opportunities to scale (one co-founder has told me repeatedly that the primary goal is to perfect the model in their Delhi learning center before thinking any bigger), these two initiatives have essentially fallen into their laps.

SEF’s complementarity to the government school system in Delhi is unclear. SEF’s methods are so unorthodox relative to the norm that it may not be clear to government decisionmakers if it would be useful or feasible on a broader scale and within schools themselves. SEF’s own attempt at running a school in Delhi will certainly help clear up this mystery. If SEF’s school turns out successful and is not overly costly compared to running a regular government school, then the complementarity would become quite high. SEF’s embeddedness in the government in Delhi is quite low since SEF just runs an independent learning center. In their new Kashmir project, this may be a different story, especially given that the goal is to build relationships with and train government school teachers.

Adding to theoretical frameworks based on empirical evidence

Now that evidence on scaling up from the three case studies has been presented, the purpose of this section is to juxtapose this evidence with sociological theory on state-society collaboration. This section proposes modifications to Peter Evans’s concepts of embeddedness,
complementarity, and autonomy to better help us understand a) the relationships between education NGOs and the government structure and b) how these relationships cause growth and scaling. Some key modifications to these concepts are necessary: 1) Embeddedness and complementarity can vary at and need to be considered at three different levels of organization: administrative, managerial, and school¹⁹² (an NGO’s leaders and government officials could be heavily invested in working together while that same NGO’s teachers and the government’s teachers may not get along well). 2) The balance of embeddedness and complementarity between government and civil society actors (education NGOs in this case) needs to be taken into account (the NGO teachers could try very hard to become socially embedded with the government teachers while the latter may not reciprocate with the same effort).

To begin, various levels of embeddedness and complementarity (and also buy-in) need to be considered when looking at the relationships between civil society actors like NGOs and sectors of the government like education departments. There are potential interactions between members of the NGOs and members of the government at various levels within their organizational structures: administrative, managerial, and school levels. At the top, administrative level there are NGO administrators and government officers who give approval for projects and receive progress reports. The types of capital, goods, or information they share or decide upon are money, planning, and agreements. After this is the managerial level, where there are program managers or government relations specialists in the NGOs and principals at the schools. These actors take part in enforcing or modifying what has been agreed upon by those at the top, including day-to-day management of the intervention, reporting on progress, and

¹⁹² Or ‘local’ in the case of a community based intervention or an intervention in a domain other than education.
communicating with or about teachers. Finally, at the school level, there are NGO and
government teachers. These actors share (in some cases) knowledge about students, teaching
methods, and other educational strategies with each other. Box 6.3 shows this hierarchy of
embeddedness and complementarity. Box 6.4 shows these three levels of embeddedness and
where each NGO falls at each level. Boxes 6.5 and 6.6 show the same for complementarity and
buy-in, respectively.
Box 6.3 - Levels of embeddedness and complementarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Government Actors</th>
<th>NGO Actors</th>
<th>What they do/share</th>
<th>Result of healthy embeddedness</th>
<th>Result of unhealthy embeddedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>Founders, administrators, CEO</td>
<td>money, planning, agreements</td>
<td>Scaling up</td>
<td>Corruption, wasted resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>School headmasters</td>
<td>Program Managers, Government Relations Specialists</td>
<td>Enforcing, modifying, management, progress reporting</td>
<td>Scaling down</td>
<td>Poor management, mishandled money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Knowledge, methods, strategies</td>
<td>Scaling down</td>
<td>Time wasting, promulgation of unproductive habits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the types of actors in the government and in NGOs at each organizational level, the substance of the work they might do or share together (specific to that level), and the consequences of healthy or unhealthy embeddedness.
This diagram shows the embeddedness of NGO and government actors for each organization at each organizational level (administrative, managerial, school) in Delhi. Embeddedness means “ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide” (Evans 1996). Note that the concept of embeddedness does not capture buy-in on the part of teachers, merely social integration of the two types of actors. Embeddedness does not appear to cause buy-in in government teachers.
This diagram shows the complementarity between NGO and government actors at the three organizational levels. Complementarity means “mutually supportive relations between public and private actors” (Evans 1996). Complementarity is highest at the administrative level for TFI because both TFI and government personnel are usually supportive of the program (and TFI has a dedicated Government Relations Team) whereas Aspire has less infrastructure in place to maintain this relationship. At the managerial level, complementarity is at a medium level for Aspire program managers and school headmasters because even though principals may not have full respect for Aspire’s work, they do take some actions to help Aspire help the school, such as providing them with facilities, encouraging families to attend the Children’s Festival, occasionally allowing Aspire teachers to use the school on holidays, etc. At the school level, while embeddedness of Aspire and government teachers is high (due the efforts of the former and because some Aspire and government teachers are in fact friendly with each other), complementarity is low because when it comes to actually teaching or making educational innovations, there is no collaboration.
Box 6.6

This diagram shows the buy-in on the part of government actors into the work of the NGO actors at each organizational level for each NGO. At the managerial and school levels, none of the NGOs achieve high buy-in from government personnel (no evidence was found to the contrary), with Aspire being slightly higher than TFI because it runs school-wide events like the Children’s Festival that even government personnel appear to enjoy. At the administrative level, in Delhi, TFI has the best buy-in from officials because of how easily it can be plugged into new schools and generate “quick wins.” Nationwide, all three NGOs have good buy-in with administrative government actors given Aspire’s project in Odisha and SEF’s in Kashmir. Note that buy-in is not found to relate to embeddedness. Since fieldwork was conducted in Delhi only, there is no information upon which to make determinations of government personnel buy-in of these NGOs’ work at the managerial and school levels.

At each of the levels of embeddedness and complementarity described above, there is a balance to the relationship that merits attention. For example, in the case of TFI and Aspire, any
embeddedness that exists between these NGOs and the government is due to the NGOs’ own heavy efforts to cultivate relationships and secure contracts. There are no government actors making concomitant (or any other kind of) efforts to maintain the relationship. The onus to maintain embeddedness is upon the NGOs. SEF’s Kashmir project is different because the government recruited SEF to start a new project, which may lead to a more balanced embeddedness with close to equal effort from both sides. But in the case of TFI and Aspire, any embeddedness or complementarity that exists is lopsided, meaning that there is no evidence of balanced mutual effort on the parts of both sides (NGO and government) to maintain the relationship.

No formal mechanism exists to create public-private partnerships in education in India, unlike the USA which has a charter school system in most states. Therefore, the few partnerships that do emerge must be the result of efforts of pragmatic, opportunistic, and determined individuals who work hard to convince the government that they are worth doing. TFI and Aspire, the two partnerships in Delhi that I studied, are characterized by a one-sided or lopsided embeddedness in which NGO members try hard to become involved with, gain the favor of, and

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193 A Delhi city-level TFI administrator told me in an interview on October 10, 2015 that TFI’s government relations team actively and frequently manages its relationship with the government and it is TFI’s unilateral effort that drives the partnership. The Aspire founder likewise told me in an interview on January 11, 2015 that he had to repeatedly make attempts to communicate with government officials before being allowed to pilot his program in government schools.

194 There are some education PPPs in India, but simply no single, formal, institutionalized mechanism for their formation and regulation.

195 Note that other divisions, ministries, and offices of the government do sometimes put out calls for applications for help on more limited educational projects, to which NGOs can reply and state their intention to collaborate. If they win the application, the government will provide funds for the NGO to carry out the project, as with a more traditional PPP setup. However, such partnerships do not happen within the government school system and appear to usually pertain to some more bounded work than the day-to-day education of school students.
assist the government system while government system members merely unenthusiastically tolerate NGO work for the most part and are also able to take credit for it when it is good.

Another form of imbalanced embeddedness and complementarity is one in which the NGO and high-level officials may be enthusiastic about the collaboration but the ground-level members of the government system (e.g., teachers at government schools) are not supportive. There is high potential for this in any PPP which is decided at the top but then has to be carried out by those at the bottom. Consider a more standard PPP like a construction project: in this situation, the government pays a private company an agreed-upon sum of money to build something with certain parameters by an agreed-upon date. And then the private company can more or less be fully in charge of the project. In education partnerships with NGOs, there are two key differences: First, the NGOs are paying by themselves; and second, NGO teachers are going into schools that already exist as government schools where there are already government school teachers in the very same environment. It is as if the construction project would be co-managed between a private contractor and a government contractor who each have different preferences and habits. It is much more complicated. How this plays out in practice at the school level is addressed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, in education, the work being done is on young students rather than bricks and concrete. There is no way to know how each student will react to an NGO intervention, making the situation much more delicate. So a lot of the standard theory on PPPs does not apply as easily to education projects.

Finally, embeddedness and complementarity need to be healthy in quality, not just high in magnitude. In other words, the relationships between civil society actors like NGOs and the government need to be well-intentioned and well-structured with key stakeholders in mind. In
education, they have to be such that students, taxpayers, and funding organizations also benefit. When these goals are compromised, there is potential for corruption even if the NGO and government actors involved have a strong relationship. The corruption example given to me by the CEO Anirudh, recounted earlier in this chapter, shows what can happen when civil society and government choose to work together for their own gain, at the expense of taxpayer and funding organizations. Any of the NGOs in this study could easily embezzle money from the government or granting foundations. As India continues its path towards becoming a cashless economy, such corruption will become much harder, but for now it is still a possibility. The goals of the individuals from NGOs and the government would be complementary to one another in the case of corrupt agreements, but the goals would not be complementary with those of the government or NGO overall. There would also be a lack of professionalism and accountability with the partnership. Therefore, we can add that for educational PPPs, complementarity between civil society, government, and key stakeholders (like students and parents) is essential.

While the additions to the theory of embeddedness and complementarity are useful to understanding education PPPs as described above, the most important finding must not be forgotten: high-quality embeddedness and complementarity at the administrative level between the NGOs and government is important for “scaling up” because expansion to more and more schools is contingent upon approval from government officials. It is not necessary to have high-quality embeddedness and complementarity at the managerial and school levels in order to scale up. Furthermore, complementarity at the school level is important for “scaling down,” because NGO and government teachers have to work together well for curriculum to be deeply

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196 Purely defined as growth in terms of number of schools, with no consideration for scaling down.
implemented at each school. Of course, no evidence of being fully scaled down was observed in the case of any of the three NGOs, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Beyond complementarity and embeddedness, Evans also demonstrates the importance of government autonomy, stating that the government needs to be able to act separately from the interest of any powerful elites in order to form successful partnerships with civil society. While government autonomy indeed seems to be quite important, even though it was not the main focus of my research, it is clear in my findings that both the autonomy as well as the capacity of not only the state but also the NGOs may also be important to partnership formation, maintenance, and growth. For an education NGO, having autonomy means that the organization has the freedom to choose curriculum on their own and to expand without many restrictions. Capacity refers to their ability to choose their own curriculum and expand. Although there is no formal mechanism for NGOs to partner with the government (which would empower them much more than they currently are to work with the government), NGOs in Delhi are still quite autonomous at the administrative level in their ability to approach the government or to begin an education project separate from the government (as in the case of SEF).

The capacity of these NGOs, however, differs significantly, especially when it comes to expansion. As described earlier in the chapter, TFI can expand quickly by securing contracts and plugging in new teachers into classrooms. Aspire has many more human capital infrastructure requirements with each new school it goes to. It not only needs to train and find teachers but also needs those teachers to immerse themselves in the government school. Aspire also requires a lot of managerial and administrative involvement to move into a new school compared to TFI. And Aspire does not have any kind of expansion infrastructure at all, unlike TFI which has a
Framework for scaling down

The findings in the previous sections suggest that even when buy-in is low, 1) embeddedness and complementarity can be high and 2) the intervention can continue to scale to more schools. Therefore, before proceeding to the next sections that relate directly to scaling up, it is necessary to pause here to elucidate the relationship between scaling down, embeddedness, complementarity, buy-in, and sustainability. Clearly, the interventions studied in this dissertation are scaling up regardless of their depth of intervention (extent of being scaled down) in any one school. These interventions do not need to be completely scaled down in each school in order to be ready to scale up; they simply need to be sustainably scaled down. To make sense of this distinction, I propose stages for scaling down that can be used to classify any school-based education intervention. My proposed classification is highly compatible with Coburn’s (2003) definition of scaling down (which she refers to as “depth”). This classification simply points out that interventions can be scaled down to varying extents or levels. These levels of being scaled down can in turn be used to determine the relationship between scaling up and scaling down.

Box 6.7 shows the stages of scaling down that I propose. These can also be thought of as levels of depth of the implementation of an intervention at a school. In an unclear model, the NGO (or other entity) attempting to implement an intervention is not doing a good job. They are having trouble running their own intervention in a school even with their own personnel. It is
unclear if the intervention can even continue for much longer or succeed in any long-term capacity. Interventions that are failing or are about to fail (meaning their day-to-day operations cannot be smoothly executed) fall into this category. Obviously, an intervention that is at the *unclear model* stage of being scaled down could not reasonably be scaled up to more schools.

TFI falls into the next category of being *sustainably scaled down*. This means that TFI’s operations in the schools in which it works are running sustainably. NGO personnel come to school every day, teach designated students on a schedule that is agreed upon by the school headmaster and the NGO’s leaders or managers, and are part of a clear organizational structure. In other words, the logistics of the intervention are agreed upon by everyone involved and can be executed on a regular basis. Once logistics are in place, the intervention is sustainable at the school, even though only NGO teachers are running it, government teachers are not involved, and student learning outcomes have not been taken into account. The NGO intervention has met the minimum requirements to continue to operate in the government school.

Aspire falls into the third category of being *embeddedly scaled down*. This means that Aspire’s intervention meets all of the criteria for being sustainably scaled down and is additionally operating at a greater level of depth. As documented in Chapter 4, Aspire teachers deliberately cultivate relationships with government personnel, something that TFI does not prioritize. Aspire teachers also attempt to help the government personnel at the school in any way necessary and conduct activities that potentially put them in contact with all teachers and students. In other words, Aspire teachers socially embed themselves into schools. However, there is little evidence of any government teacher buy-in into Aspire’s intervention. There are no signs of government teachers adopting any aspect of Aspire’s methods into their own teaching. There
is also no evidence of any students adopting a different culture of learning as a result of Aspire’s work. Therefore, even though Aspire teachers are clearly more scaled down than TFI teachers, Aspire is not in the completely scaled down category.

Being completely scaled down is what Coburn and other scholars of school intervention implementation would consider to be the ideal eventual outcome of an intervention, with government and NGO (or other intervening entity) personnel working cooperatively side by side. Finally, I have included adopted as the final stage of being scaled down. This means that the recipients of the intervention (especially the students and teachers) have bought into the intervention to such an extent that the presence of intervention personnel (such as NGO teachers) is no longer even necessary in order to operate the intervention.

These distinctions are important because they show that despite failing to be completely scaled down or adopted within one or more government schools, all three NGOs are scaling up (growing in the number of government schools or classrooms they enter). Even without demonstrating improvements in student learning outcomes, all three NGOs are scaling up. In other words, for an education intervention in Delhi government schools, it appears that being fully scaled down is not necessary to scale up.
Box 6.7 - The stages of scaling down at any one school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclear model</td>
<td>Intervening organization (NGO) has its own personnel in place to run the intervention but the intervention does not run smoothly, even though it is complementary to the government. Strategy and personnel changes are frequent. Government may not be happy with intervention status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainably scaled down</td>
<td>Intervention is complementary to government operations at the administrative level and is running smoothly with NGO personnel only. Strategy rarely changes, except to make reasonable adaptations. Government is satisfied or pleased with intervention status. TFI falls into this category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedly scaled down</td>
<td>In addition to being sustainably scaled down, NGO teachers are socially embedded/integrated in the government school and involved in activities beyond their own classrooms. Aspire falls into this category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely scaled down</td>
<td>Government teachers (and students) demonstrate buy-in and desire to adopt methods from the NGO’s intervention. Government and NGO teachers work together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted</td>
<td>Government teachers (and students) have fully adopted and implemented the methods of the intervention. NGO presence is no longer necessary at the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that SEF falls outside of this classification since it was not operating any programs or interventions within government schools at the time fieldwork was conducted.
Discussion: Comparing interventions, incorporating theory, and identifying growth factors

Using the theoretical concepts described in the previous section for analytic leverage, this section compares the recent and planned growth of the three NGOs and identifies key factors that positively impact growth and scaling. These growth-enabling factors are complementarity and embeddedness at the administrative level only (including taking a "quick wins" approach), being just sustainably but not completely scaled down, having independent funding, having high fidelity across schools, and having low human capital needs. Importantly, teacher buy-in or being fully scaled down is not part of this list, as they are not found to be necessary criteria for an intervention to scale up. Furthermore, scaling up and scaling down are not a trade-off in the traditional way: while scaling down does require resources that could take away from scaling up, an NGO’s work at a few schools could be at any stage of being scaled down at or beyond sustainably scaled down and still scale up successfully.

All three NGOs have recent or impending growth as well as the opportunity to reach many more students than before. While TFI and Aspire are not truly “scaled down” (because teacher buy-in is low in all cases), available evidence\textsuperscript{197} shows that they nevertheless have penetrated deeply enough at the school level, using their own personnel, to be at least sustainable at each school and to expand to more schools. SEF is of course completely scaled down with its own students at the independent learning center where it operates, but its model is not ready to be scaled up in any way.

\textsuperscript{197} Presented in Chapters 4-6, which shows that TFI and Aspire are stably established at the schools in which they operate with no insurmountable threats to their operations or requests to leave a school.
Box 6.8 - Enabling factors that positively influence education NGO growth and scaling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth factor</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity at administrative level</td>
<td>TFI’s model can be quickly replicated in new schools by plugging in TFI teachers into government classrooms without much reorganization required for TFI or the government school. This quick procedure can establish TFI quickly at a school and also reflect positively on a government officer for putting the program in place so fast as a “quick win.” Managerial and school-level complementarity are less important for scaling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness at administrative level</td>
<td>TFI and Aspire have taken efforts to secure contracts with the government by cultivating relationships with government officers and placating them sending them regular reports that make them look good. Managerial and school-level embeddedness are not important prerequisites for scaling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainably scaled down</td>
<td>As with TFI, the interventions should be stable enough at each school that it is running smoothly with no or minimal required changes to structure or strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent funding source</td>
<td>Funding for TFI and Aspire comes from third party donors, making the government more comfortable allowing the programs to grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>TFI’s model is almost identical from school to school, so it can be easily replicated in other schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low human capital needs</td>
<td>TFI has low human capital needs because its teachers are basically interchangeable and can be trained relatively easily. SEF is the opposite (and therefore less scalable) because its teacher(s) are intrinsically talented in a way that cannot be taught.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table identifies factors that enable education NGOs to scale up their operations to more schools or settings. Notably, *teacher buy-in is not part of this list and is not necessary for growth*. It is clear that NGOs are able to scale their interventions to more schools despite having low buy-in from government teachers in each one. *All factors are political, bureaucratic, or organizational in nature rather than having to do with outcomes for students.*
This table compares some of the basic characteristics of the NGO cases as they relate to scalability. Each NGO has a different source of funding. TFI tends to be the most scalable of the NGOs because of its low human capital and administrative needs and low levels of necessary and achieved government teacher buy-in. SEF is the least scalable because of its high human capital and administrative needs.

TFI has been growing year after year for almost ten years, while Aspire and SEF have just begun to do so, with Aspire’s gradual growth in Delhi and huge growth in Odisha, and SEF’s growth in Kashmir and Delhi. TFI’s model is by far the most scalable and consistent (high-fidelity) across all of the schools in which it goes. Implementation of its program in each new school is easier because a TFI teacher can just be plugged into an open classroom. There is no process of integration within the school that is necessary. SEF’s intervention is the least scalable, because of its high human capital needs required to be successful in each instance. Aspire’s model is also hard to scale because of the administrative effort that goes into integrating with each new school. Nevertheless, Aspire will be attempting a very large scaling effort in Odisha very soon and SEF will be attempting a medium-sized effort in Kashmir. Out of the three, SEF is the only one that will receive government funding for a large-scale project, while the other two rely on private funding sources.

As far as complementarity and embeddedness go, all three NGOs have missions that are
complementary to the goals of the government, but TFI’s ability to scale fast makes it the most complementary to decisionmakers in the government who desire “quick wins,” meaning which look impressive as quickly as possible (as opposed to a more elaborate project which requires more resources and time to get going and sustain). This is another explanation for why the TFI model can scale fast: its plug-in model allows for quick implementation in a school, which gets the attention of government officials. The officials then allow TFI to expand even more, meaning more quick implementation in more schools and feathers in everyone’s caps. This process can continue as a “virtuous cycle of scaling up,” as shown in Box 6.10.

Box 6.10 - Virtuous cycle of scaling up for education NGOs

Exemplified by the case of Teach for India, one way that education NGOs can scale up to more schools is by implementing their programs in schools quickly, thereby impressing government officials and also making them look good. The officials in turn will allow the NGO to work in even more schools.
Since Aspire gives lots of attention to every school it works in, it is very complementary to the government simply because their schools are understaffed and Aspire can help to fill some of the gaps. To the extent that I am aware, TFI and Aspire are only heavily embedded in the government bureaucracy by virtue of their formal agreements. These agreements are governed by contracts (MOUs) and regular reporting by the NGO to the government about progress. At the school level, Aspire is much more heavily embedded than TFI, though their complementarity is also weaker due to lack of strong reciprocal effort from the regular government teachers.

Complementarity between the government and these NGOs may decrease as soon as the government has to pay for the work. If the government were to fund these interventions, they would be paying their own teachers, who are supposed to be running government schools, in addition to paying for NGO teachers to come in and do the same work. It is different from American charter schools or standard PPPs in which the government will pay a school leadership team or private company instead of hiring more government employees to do the work. In this sense, SEF’s Kashmir project fits the best into the existing school ecosystem, because it is providing a variety of support that is not already there (ongoing teacher training outside of school).

Aspire is more embedded than TFI at the school level not only because the Aspire teachers try to immerse themselves in the school but also because the government school teachers know the students the best. The government teachers are embedded in the community much more than the Aspire teachers. They know more about the students, their families, and their communities. Government teachers at Aspire schools sometimes told me stories about individual students. For example, one teacher, Neera, told me while sitting in her classroom
(while she should have been teaching but was instead talking with me) about one student who is addicted to sniffing glue or paint and how she has caught him doing so in one of the nearby neighborhoods before. She tried to intervene and make him stop but he has continued to do this. Government teachers like Neera may be delinquent in some of their duties, but they do care about their students and know their lives better than anyone else. So if the students see that the Aspire teachers are friendly with the government teachers who care about them, they may be more likely to trust the Aspire teachers, who of course also care about them but do not know them at first. This particular mechanism of embeddedness needs to be examined further, but I have certainly seen enough to hypothesize that this is the case. This dynamic would be very different for TFI because there is no party acting as an intermediary between the TFI teachers and the students. Having an intermediary could help the intervention take root, penetrate, and “scale down” better at each school.

However, as we saw in Chapter 5, these differences in embeddedness at schools between TFI and Aspire does not result in a difference between the two interventions in the enthusiasm for or adoption of their methods by government teachers. While government teachers at Aspire schools may know the Aspire staff much better than their counterparts know TFI teachers at TFI schools, they are also not using any of Aspire’s methods on their own, even though this is one of Aspire’s main long-term goals, whereas there is no indication that TFI ever wants this. Despite high embeddedness, Aspire does not achieve high buy-in at the school level from teachers. 

*Buy-in is critical to fully scaling down but not to scaling up, because the NGOs are using their own personnel to scale up.*

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198 During classroom observation at TFI School B on December 10, 2015.
While SEF does not have any collaborations with the government in Delhi, they do have a new project with the Kashmir government and were recruited by a high-level government official, unlike any TFI and Aspire initiatives. So SEF may be more embedded, and in a more balanced way, at higher levels of the governmental structure than TFI and Aspire, being able to have regular contact with a high-ranking official and those who work for him or her. SEF can also shape this intervention along with the government instead of planning it separately. This may lead to it being more complementary than TFI and Aspire interventions to the goals of the government.

As shown in Chapter 4, the three NGOs use very different pedagogies with their students. These differences also contribute to the relative scalability of each NGO. TFI is using a model that is globally recognized and considered to be a common and legitimate intervention. It certainly has its critics, but it is nevertheless extremely prevalent. Aspire’s work is based on extensive research, but it is much less well known. And SEF is of course the newest and least well known. TFI and SEF also conduct most of their instruction in English while Aspire exclusively teaches in Hindi, and does not even teach English as a subject. All SEF and many TFI students interacted with me in English. But no one, be it students or staff, at an Aspire school ever spoke with me in English (though the administrative staff at the central office did), whereas the bulk of my interactions with TFI teachers at their schools were in English. Since English is seen as an important skill for upward mobility in the Indian labor market, TFI (and to a limited extent SEF) has a leg up over the other NGOs.

To summarize, none of these interventions are truly scaled down or deeply embedded, because government teachers are not adopting their methods. Scaling down is not one of TFI’s
goals, whereas Aspire and SEF do hope to accomplish this as soon as possible in the future. Aspire is much more embedded in schools than TFI and is poised to have at least limited success in scaling down in the near future. Nevertheless, the process of scaling up is independent from being scaled down or not. So, while in terms of resources, this may be a standard breadth for depth trade-off (because an NGO that decides to put effort into scaling down will have less time and personnel available to scale up), it is overall quite different because the actors within the system who decide if an intervention will scale or not (mainly government officials) do not care about the extent to which the intervention is scaled down or impacting learning outcomes. They just care about how the intervention looks and how it will make them look for making the decision to implement it. Implementing an intervention that might not operate successfully is a big risk whereas implementing one that has a globally recognized model like TFI will be more likely to be successful (or at least run sustainably). Therefore, factors having to do with scaling down and learning outcomes take a backseat the the key growth-enabling factors identified in this chapter.

Practical framework for scaling educational interventions

Based on the findings of my fieldwork, I propose a simple Scalability Assessment Framework (SAF) for organizations to use when determining how, when, and how much to grow. Many of the theoretical and empirical factors elucidated above need to be taken into consideration by organizations as they consider scaling up. The SAF consists of three steps: 1)
Scaling down: examining the organization’s intervention within each school, 2) Scaling up: looking across schools within the organization’s network of interventions, comparing outcomes, and determining whether scaling up more is appropriate, and 3) Regularly re-evaluating the size and quality of the organization. Box 6.11 shows the full framework.

As Coburn (2003) writes, “A conception of scale that fully incorporates depth has key implications for research design, suggesting not only an increased emphasis on measures of classroom change, but also a focus on measures that capture beliefs, norms, and pedagogical principles as enacted in the classroom.” The SAF I propose in this section is motivated by this statement and is meant to take the fidelity and depth (scaling down) of education interventions into full account when considering the question of growth (scaling up). The SAF unites scaling down and scaling up in the process of growth and encourages NGOs or other planners of educational interventions to take both items into account together.
NGOs or other interveners at schools can use this three-step framework to determine when growth to more schools is appropriate. First, NGOs should look at Step #1 and make sure enough of the criteria are met, such that NGO leaders or other stakeholders such as students, parents, and teachers are satisfied. If this is the case, they can proceed to Step #2 where, if enough criteria are also met, they can consider scaling their intervention beyond its current size. Finally, as Step #3 shows, organizations should regularly be re-evaluating their status against these criteria.

Step #1 in the framework focuses on indicators at each school that NGOs can use to determine the extent to which they are scaled down and to determine if key stakeholders are satisfied with their work. It is not necessary for each NGO to meet all of the criteria in Step #1, but rather enough of them such that the intervention is sustainable at each school, there are not frequent changes in strategy or personnel required, and key stakeholders are satisfied. Step
#1 consists of a few, simple questions that NGOs can use to compare their various schools to each other. So even if, for example, an NGO has low teacher buy-in in both School A and School B in which they work, they will at least know later, in Step #2, that this was the same for them in both schools. If that NGO instead had high buy-in at School A and low buy-in at School B, they could choose to wait to expand into School C until they also achieved high buy-in at School B. So the checklist in Step #1 of the SAF is meant to yield information about scaling down that will allow the NGO to compare the instances of its intervention to each other in Step #2.

Step #2 is about looking at the bigger picture of all the schools or locations at which an NGO is intervening, comparing the status of each, taking into consideration other NGO-wide characteristics, and then making a decision about whether scaling up is a good strategy and good investment of resources. The key question in Step 2 is “Is any variation across schools detrimental to the whole system of interventions operated by the NGO?” Answering this question causes the NGO to determine the fidelity (extent of variation, or extent to which the various instances are similar) of their intervention across settings to then determine if that level of fidelity is appropriate. If NGO leaders deem this level of fidelity to be appropriate and not detrimental to the work of the organization or their ability to satisfy stakeholders\(^{199}\), then they should scale to more schools (if they have the funding, personnel, and resources to do so). In other words, if the quality of the intervention is satisfactory or better at each school, the NGO could consider scaling up to more schools.

Finally, as NGOs 1) assess and try to improve their work at each individual school and 2)

\(^{199}\) In this case, stakeholders should be broadly conceptualized, as in Chapter 5, including government and NGO leaders, students, and parents. Funders (who are not considered to be stakeholders for the purposes of this dissertation) obviously also need to be satisfied for the intervention to scale.
spread to more schools, it is important that they constantly re-evaluate where they stand to make sure that quality is maintained even as they grow. This is why Step #3 is included in the SAF, because it is not meant to be a one-time checklist, but rather a set of criteria that organizations constantly have to measure themselves against. It is especially important to conduct this re-evaluation before undertaking any major growth. Therefore, the SAF is presented as a cycle rather than as a one-time, linear process.

This framework still needs to be tested with NGOs to determine its usefulness in practice. But so far, based on the findings of this chapter, the criteria within the SAF are the ones that stand out as the most useful for NGOs to use when considering growth.

Box 6.12 - Key findings and recommendations about growth and scalability for education NGOs

- Interventions conducted by NGOs can “scale up” quite fast despite low levels of buy-in from local (regular government) teachers. NGOs conduct this scale-up using their own (non-government) personnel.

- Complementarity and embeddedness at the administrative level only (including taking a "quick wins" approach), being just sustainably but not completely scaled down, having independent funding, having high fidelity across schools, and having low human capital needs are key growth-enabling factors that allow NGOs to scale their educational interventions to more settings and schools.

- NGOs and interventions scale up for reasons independent of their quality in terms of learning outcomes for students. Instead, the biggest determinants of growth have to do with political, bureaucratic, and organizational factors.

- Scaling up is independent of scaling down. Interventions can do one without doing the other. Scaling up and down are not a trade-off in the standard way. Interventions can also scale up without demonstrating positive learning impact on students.

- NGOs should evaluate the fidelity of their intervention across all schools/settings in which they operate on a regular basis as they scale up.

- NGOs need to strike a balance between 1) adapting to and 2) maintaining uniformity across all schools in which they intervene.

- Theoretical concepts such as complementarity and embeddedness need to be examined separately at each organizational level (administrative, managerial, school)
Consequences and recommendations

In addition to the findings and recommendations throughout this chapter related to fidelity across schools, theoretical modifications to sociological theory on state-society collaboration, factors that impact scaling, and the Scalability Assessment Framework for NGOs to use, a few broader issues remain to be raised, which are the subject of this final section of Chapter 6. This section discusses the need for well-kept data on student outcomes, the lack of attention given to student outcomes as organizations demonstrate legitimacy and grow, and the relatively small impact of education NGOs on the government school system at large in New Delhi.

Ideally, the impact of the organizations studied in this dissertation and their work would be evaluated with controlled data that is carefully kept on each student involved as well as a corresponding set of control group students. At the moment, the organizations do have basic assessment tools that they use, such as TFI’s cumulative tests that they administer after the government board exams at the end of each semester, Aspire’s baseline tests and student progress folders, and SEF’s computerized records of student progress. However, these assessment instruments are often administered under conditions in which students are not monitored well, can work together, or have the opportunity to get help from other sources of information. Furthermore, they are not always graded correctly and uniformly. Finally, none of the organizations studied collect data on a control group of students, upon whom they are not directly intervening.
It would be feasible for all three organizations to find students at the schools in which they already operate who are not directly impacted by the intervention and administer separate assessments on them a few times during the year. These assessments, both for intervention (treatment) and non-intervention (control) students, also need to take place under controlled conditions, especially if they are written exams. Students should not have the opportunity to look at each other's answers or take different amounts of time to complete the assessment. In government school classrooms, such lack of uniformity during exams is extremely common. NGOs would have to take special measures, such as setting up a separate testing room with divided desks, in order to yield truly reliable data.

There is of course the counter argument that it is not fair to sort students into a control group when they could be receiving the intervention. However, in the case of these organizations, there are already many students who are not receiving the intervention. And having this additional, reliable data would allow each organization to much more accurately determine the effects of its work. The assessment that I am proposing does not need to be particularly large scale. Even if just ten or 20 students at a small proportion of the schools in which each organization operates could be tested, along with a small control group of ten students, the resulting information would be extremely useful200.

Relatively, the growth of each organization, as documented in this chapter, has been occurring and is poised to continue to occur without much attention to student impact. Organizations demonstrate their progress and garner legitimacy by submitting periodic reports to

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200 For example, this very dissertation could have incorporated such quantitative data, instead of relying fully upon classroom observation and interactions with individual students, to estimate the impact of each intervention. Once small tests such as the one described are conducted, larger and even more useful ones can be integrated into the interventions.
the government and funding organizations. These reports include photographs of student activity or recent events, stories about work that teachers have done in the classroom, and any other details that the organization feels will make its work be well received. Furthermore, if one looks at the websites of these organizations, they feature stories, organizational statistics about the size of the organization or number of classrooms within a city, the missions of the organizations to bring education to as many children in need as possible, etc. But data on student learning outcomes is absent. Nevertheless, these organizations continue to grow. *They are able to grow because of the political, bureaucratic, and organizational factors that are discussed earlier in this chapter, rather than growing by demonstrating the achievement of positive learning outcomes with students.* The organizations themselves cannot be blamed for the counterintuitive criteria used to determine their worth and readiness for scaling up. It is simply the case that the system as a whole does not have a culture of accountability or evaluating programs based on student-level outcomes. As long as this is the case, it is in the best interest of the organizations to continue to grow without conducting tests on their own impact. But students lose out, because if there were such tests, these programs could improve and deliver higher-quality curriculum.

Finally, while these organizations either already are or are about to grow steadily, none of them have a model that can easily spill over into the rest of the system and have an impact on regular government school teachers and students. At the moment, TFI in New Delhi does not even have a product that the rest of the system can adopt[^201]. Rather, it brings its own personnel and tries to do the same job better. While Aspire does desire to work alongside government teachers and those government teachers could conduct remedial work using Aspire materials, 

[^201]: Noteworthily, in Chennai and Bangalore, TFI teachers now do teach alongside government School teachers in the same classroom.
there has not been any indication so far of buy-in from the government side. Furthermore, it is unclear how the Aspire model would work if only government teachers were there at a school (or just one support person from Aspire). SEF has what any observer can identify as an amazing model, but there is no blueprint for how it could reach additional students without a significant amount of teacher training. Clearly, in the case of all three interventions, which definitely do have at least some positive impact for the children involved, modifications need to be made that would allow the intervention to be implemented by government personnel on their own.

Box 6.13 - Recommendations for Education NGOs

✓ Develop separate, dedicated mechanisms into interventions to build buy-in (because merely creating embeddedness is not good enough).
✓ Follow the Scalability Assessment Framework when considering growth in the interventions
✓ Keep reliable, controlled data on student outcomes throughout the course of the intervention. Make sure this data is collected under fair conditions.

More broadly, this raises the issue of how the private sector, civil society, and NGOs specifically may be effective in a limited way and may operate under the guise of collaboration with the government, but they are doing little to impact the large system that is Delhi or Indian government schools. This evidence adds to the hypothesis that TFI might seem to be a collaborative win-win, being good for both TFI decisionmakers and top education officials, but on the ground it is not particularly collaborative and is quite separate from government operations. Of course, the share of private schooling is increasing nationwide (NUEPA-B 2016) and some education experts in India say that this might not be a bad thing, pointing out that parents and students will have more choice in the long run under a privatized system. It does seem peculiar, though, that the government (or “the people” at large) would be fine with there
being little to no spillover effect into their mainstream operations, despite how large TFI is now.

Habib (2003) points out that small communities often rely on NGOs for services that the government is unable to provide. However, in this particular empirical setting, the government is providing the service in question (free schooling), but it is simply not at a high quality level\textsuperscript{202}. And this is not a life-or-death service like food, water, or healthcare. This is another way in which education NGOs and education PPPs do not fit many of the trends found in research on PPPs overall.

Finally, having a program that scales well is very different from having a program that is effective. Effectiveness, which boils down to positive student learning outcomes, can only be measured with well-kept data on student performance, both while they are a student and after they leave school. So the question of scalability is very different from that of effectiveness and impact. Both effective and ineffective programs can scale. The factors that influence scaling that are identified in this chapter are all independent of quality, effectiveness, impact, etc. Programs scale for political and bureaucratic reasons, more so than for having high quality from a student outcomes perspective.

\textsuperscript{202} As demonstrated by the few survey results on learning outcomes cited in Chapters 1 and 3.
Chapter 7. Recommendations and Conclusions

During the course of working on a dissertation, one has to jettison some interesting aspects of the problem or the context in order to create a cohesive, focused, and hopefully readable end product. While this dissertation focuses on NGOs and the government schools or students upon which they intervene, these interventions are just a small part of the big picture of education in Delhi or in India at large. In choosing to study and write about NGOs interventions, I had to leave out other discoveries, analysis, or content about the Indian education system. However, in this final chapter, I take the liberty of including some of this additional information to help situate my research within the landscape of Indian education and point out some of the most pressing issues beyond the NGO-government relationship alone. I also address the question of whose interests are being served by organizations such as the ones I studied.

More specifically, in this final chapter, I review the key empirical conclusions that were reached about NGO interventions in government schools and with government school students, recommendations for education NGOs (both those studied and similar ones) to consider implementing in their future operations, and observations about the bigger picture of Indian education as they relate to NGO interventions.

Empirical conclusions about NGO interventions

This section reiterates a selection of the main findings from the empirical chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 4-6) while also providing additional commentary on how they fit together
with each other and their relevance to the broader system of NGO and government actors within that system. These findings center on the three NGOs studied, Teach for India (TFI), Aspire, and Simple Education Foundation (SEF) and their interventions within government schools or with government school students.
Box 7.1 - Summary of empirical conclusions about NGO interventions in government schools

Ch 4 -- Inside the NGO: How organizational structure and policy shape in-school capabilities

- Rigid curricular models, used in TFI and government classrooms, have the “syllabus problem” that teachers have to rush through material, causing some students to fall behind. Flexible models such as those in Aspire and SEF allow teachers to teach at the appropriate speed for each learning level.
- Organizational support, training, and mentorship of teachers is essential for teachers to be effective in the classroom.
- Tightly-managed teachers are more integrated than loosely-managed teachers into the organizations for which they work and in turn run their classrooms more effectively.

Ch 5 -- A Clash of Learning Cultures: NGOs versus Government Schools

- Government and NGO teachers espouse separate “cultures of learning.” Government teachers believe that some students are capable of learning while others are not, giving more priority to the former and essentially blacklisting the latter. NGO teachers instead give equal attention to all students.
- Government teachers enforce discipline and rote learning in their classrooms while NGO teachers maintain a more organic environment and give more attention to student learning.
- NGO teachers are sometimes affected by government school culture, relaxing their standards for punctuality, teaching standards, and review of student work.

Ch 6 -- Beyond the NGO: “Scaling up” versus “scaling down”

- Strong NGO-government relations at the administrative level only, being just sustainably but not necessarily completely “scaled down,” having independent funding, having high fidelity across schools, and having low human capital needs are key growth-enabling factors that allow NGOs to scale their educational interventions to more settings and schools.
- NGOs can scale up regardless of the quality of their interventions. Growth-enabling factors relate more to political situations, bureaucratic preferences, and organizational structure more than to learning outcomes for students.
- “Scaling up” and “scaling down” are not closely related phenomena. Being fully scaled down and achieving buy-in from government teachers (those being intervened upon) is not necessary for an intervention to scale to more schools.

Review of Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I study the impact of organizational structure and policies on the execution of education interventions in schools. This investigation includes the curriculum, teacher
management, and extracurricular programming of each NGO. The analytic strategy of Chapter 4 is to compare the operations of the three NGOs with each other to understand how their unique strategies impact their ability to effectively deliver their interventions to students. I find that Aspire’s “tight” management structure that requires teachers to report to a central office daily, immerse themselves in the schools where they work, and work as a team of teachers across different Aspire’s schools gives Aspire teachers the support they need to operate effectively in the classroom. Furthermore, their flexible curriculum that adapts to the speed of student learning based on rubrics allows Aspire to more effectively deliver their curriculum to students.

Meanwhile, TFI’s “loose” management structure, which does not require much interaction between TFI teachers at different schools or between TFI and government teachers, results in TFI teachers being siloed into their own separate teaching environment, with lower than ideal levels of support from their organization. This is compounded by the “syllabus problem” that TFI teachers must teach at the speed prescribed by the government curriculum they use, causing them to teach their material faster than all students are able to reasonably learn and retain it. TFI (and even government) teachers frequently complained to me about how they had to rush to finish the syllabus before the end of the semester.

SEF has the most flexibility because of its small size and decision to use extremely creative curriculum that changes based on circumstances in the local community, student learning levels, and new teaching ideas generated by the leadership. This is demonstrated by the large variety of projects the students conduct and topics they study during any period of a few months at SEF. SEF’s operations in Delhi do not have to confront issues related to managing teachers at multiple schools or choosing whether or not to integrate with government personnel.
because they have decided to remain as a separate learning center, trying to improve their educational model while waiting for opportunities to collaborate with the government.

These findings show that even though these three organizations have the same mission of increasing educational quality and access for children growing up in low-resource environments, specific decisions about their organizational structures, policies on how to manage teachers, and decisions on which curriculum to teach means that they can execute this mission to very different extents. TFI succeeds in creating a separate school environment for its students but its curriculum cannot reasonably cater to all of the students in a classroom. Aspire tries to integrate into government school processes and despite having well-tested curriculum that should result in positive learning outcomes quickly, Aspire has to frequently deal with political or bureaucratic issues that slow down their progress. While Aspire has to appease teachers at the schools where they work by serving as substitutes or changing their strategies based on parent feedback, TFI can operate much more autonomously at each school. SEF, on the other hand, does not suffer from these limitations because it is both in an isolated learning environment like TFI and also has a flexible curriculum plan like Aspire. However, as Chapter 6 shows, SEF’s size, reach, and potential for growth is much more limited, whereas TFI and Aspire can grow quite quickly.

Future research on the issue of how NGO-operated educational interventions are structured should look further at the teaching behaviors, competency levels, and preferences of teachers. It should also look directly at learning outcomes of students. This dissertation has uncovered mechanisms through which organizational characteristics influence teachers’ abilities to execute effective interventions in schools. But it does not look closely at the next step in the chain reaction of how these resulting abilities of the teachers impact student learning outcomes.
This dissertation stops at the point of teacher behavior as the outcome of interest. Therefore, I recommend a quantitative study that treats teacher behaviors as an independent variable and student learning outcomes (in quantitative terms, such as test scores) as the dependent variable. This will allow us to learn more about the impact that decisions made at each NGO’s administrative level have on student learning outcomes.

Review of Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, I use a different analytic strategy, treating the NGO teachers as one group and the government teachers as another, comparing the behaviors, strategies, and habits of members of these two groups to understand 1) how their approaches to education differ from each other and 2) the outcomes we observe when both groups occupy the same learning environment. I find many differences that impact how these two types of teachers operate in school and teach their students. I refer to these differences as separate “cultures of learning.”

Most importantly, government teachers both believe and even state aloud that some students are capable of learning at school while others are not. Each student is considered to be part of one of the following two groups: students who can learn and students who cannot learn. Each student carries around this label, which is treated as a fixed, unchangeable characteristic. It was common for a teacher to say to me, referring to a particular student, “Us ko nahi aata!” meaning “he doesn’t get it” or “she doesn’t learn.” It was common for students to hear this being said about themselves and to show signs of knowing that they are part of either the learning or non-learning group. If a student in the former, learning-capable, category showed their work to the teacher, the teacher would remark to me “he understands” or “she does great work.” Students
in the non-learning category would sometimes even themselves tell me “Muj ko nahi aata,” meaning “I don’t learn,” if I approached them and tried to teach them something new, ask a question to test their knowledge about a previously-encountered topic, or help them with an exercise in their notebook.

NGO teachers never propagated the notion that there is inequality in learning ability between the students. They would sometimes point out an exceptionally brilliant student, but overall they treated all students equally and certainly never came anywhere close to saying to a student’s face that they are incapable of learning. This difference in attitude is representative of the overall differing approaches between the two groups of teachers. Government teachers treat teaching as a perfunctory procedure that is meant to be completed by having students fill out notebooks with materials copied from a blackboard or textbook. NGO teachers treat teaching as an opportunity to transform children and improve their future lives. To the extent that they could, NGO teachers attempted to reflect this in their in-school behaviors.

Some NGO teachers, however, also showed signs of adopting some of the behaviors that correspond with the government school culture of learning. For example, government schools usually run behind schedule throughout the day, especially by expanding lunch and other break times while compressing instructional time. As a result, some NGO teachers also appeared to relax their attention to scheduling and timing. Many of them often arrived late to school or skipped days of school altogether. Most critically, some NGO teachers were observed to omit following up with their students as needed within the classroom itself. Some did not give

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203 And teachers and students alike vacate the premises the moment the bell rings for the end of the day, meaning that skipped instructional time cannot be compensated for by postponing the end of the day.
individual attention to students and also at times taught in a more perfunctory style that prioritized getting through the material rather than teaching it to have students retain or apply it. It is important to note, though, that NGO teachers usually maintained an organic classroom environment, featuring deliberately chosen classroom management techniques, even if the effectiveness of some of their teaching behaviors decreased.

Throughout my fieldwork, I often interpreted the interventions I was studying as cultural battles between government and NGO cultures. Small changes in behaviors of government or NGO teachers constituted little wins and losses for each side. If I saw an NGO teacher reviewing homework or an exercise with a student in their notebook, I would mentally record a win for the NGO culture. If I saw an NGO teacher just putting a checkmark at the top of the page instead of carefully reading what a student had done, I would record a loss for the NGO culture. In this sense, the entire education system and the efforts to reform education in India are very much a cultural war featuring smaller battles like the ones I studied. It is about trying to get people who have been following their particular practices and beliefs for a very long time to change their minds about how teaching can be most effective and how the school system should be organized and managed.

Review of Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, I look at the operations of the NGOs beyond the school level to understand how they “scale up” to reach more schools and students. In order to do this, it was critical to examine how each organization’s intervention varied from school to school and whether this level of variation was appropriate or not. I found that TFI’s intervention varied the least from...
school to school, Aspire’s varied more, and SEF’s would likely vary the most if it operated in multiple locations. TFI’s intervention is most readily packaged and exported to new settings, especially because it creates a separate school environment for its students within a government school. Aspire’s model calls for Aspire teachers to integrate themselves into the schools in which they intervene and offer support to those schools in any way needed. This model requires Aspire teachers to invest time in a school to integrate themselves before they can do effective teaching work. SEF’s model depends on the instincts and knowledge of a single talented educator who makes ongoing changes to the pedagogy and organization of the learning process with his students. This model can only be scaled up once the curriculum becomes more standardized and replicable.

I also found that scalability was tied to an organization’s relationships to the government bureaucracy at the administrative level, whereas the corresponding relationships at the school level, while potentially important for pedagogy and effectiveness, do not have a bearing on an organization’s ability to scale up. TFI maintains strong relations with government officials and even has a government relations team, whose specific purpose is to make sure TFI complies with all regulations and requests from the government. Since TFI is designed based on a well-known global model and can be implemented quickly in new places, it also has a higher chance of being regarded as a success in any given school (from the perspective of a government officer who wants to show off that he has helped implement a program in the schools he oversees). Aspire, on the other hand, had to practically beg for meetings with government officials who would allow them to do a pilot in one school. After this pilot succeeded, Aspire was allowed to launch in more schools in Delhi. It was explained to me how Aspire administrators take great pains to
promptly give the government officers anything they request and support the schools in any way. Aspire also keeps diligent documentation of student progress so that they can show to government officers that their program is effective and worth continuing. SEF does not have any collaboration or open dialogue with government administrators in Delhi but plans to in the future once its educational methods have evolved more.

Before an organization scales to more settings, it is important to ask how effective it is in the places where it already operates. I find that an organization merely needs to demonstrate that it is sustainable in a particular location rather than completely “scaled down.” In other words, the intervention needs to be sustainable, meaning it is operating smoothly on a daily basis such that frequent attention from management or changes in strategy are not necessary. But there is no requirement for scaling up that the organization should be completely scaled down, meaning that teachers, students, and other school-level actors outside of the NGO have bought into and adopted the methods of the intervention themselves.

Based on my findings, I go on to develop a “scalability assessment framework” that NGOs can use to determine whether they can healthily grow in size in a sustainable way that does not neglect the quality of their intervention in individual schools. This framework encourages NGOs to make sure that any variation between their interventions in various settings is a beneficial adaptation to the setting rather than a detrimental aberration from the school-level model of the intervention. I recommend that an NGO should not scale up until the variation between its interventions is at a satisfactory level of being scaled down.

Further research on the scalability of NGO-operated educational interventions can further investigate the uncovered paradox that scaling up does not necessarily depend on the
effectiveness of an intervention. Whereas this dissertation looks at this situation primarily from the perspective of the NGOs, other researchers wishing to work on this issue could also conduct more significant ethnography and interviews with government officials to understand more about how they decide on which NGOs to let into the system.

Larger considerations about educational NGOs

Robert K. Merton (1968) identified that in any system, there will be manifest and latent functions, which he defines as follows:

- “Manifest functions are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by participants in the system” (p. 105).
- “Latent functions, correlative, being those which are neither intended nor recognized” (p. 105).

For the purposes of the NGO interventions I studied, manifest functions or aspects of an intervention are ones that are openly stated and acknowledged as the goals of the program and the benefits that intervention recipients will receive. Latent functions or aspects of these interventions are ones that are hidden and less visible. In this subsection, I consider the possibility that the hidden, latent functions of these NGOs may actually have more impact on the various actors involved than the openly acknowledged, manifest functions. Using this framework from Merton is a systematic way to answer the question of whose interests are truly being served by the NGOs. The manifest function of the NGOs is to serve the students, but it is possible that other latent functions of the NGOs actually serve the interests of other actors instead.
The single key manifest function of all three NGOs is the same: To improve the quality of education provided to government school students. All three state that this is their goal and that they are working to make life better for the children of India. All actions that the NGOs take are meant to be in service of this manifest goal.

The possible latent functions of these NGOs’ activities are of course more complicated. In addition to the students and families, there are a number of NGO actors within the system, including teachers, managers, and administrators. There are also government teachers and officials. I can hypothesize about and, in some cases, provide limited evidence for ways in which the NGOs’ operations benefit these additional actors. The group that likely stands to gain the most while also likely being the most controversial is the NGO teachers. They are receiving training and mentorship that works towards their own professional development. TFI teachers first attend a summer training institute, which I did not have the chance to observe. They also attend quarterly city-wide conferences, which I attended twice, that appeared to be geared more towards professional development than pedagogy. TFI states on its website that over 50% of its alumni (meaning former teachers, in this case) stay in development-related fields, but I am not aware of any cases of these alumni becoming classroom teachers. To be fair, I am aware of multiple seemingly-impactful NGOs that have been started by ex-TFI teachers.

While I did not discuss this with any of the TFI teachers during my fieldwork, it is certainly possible that some of them choose to apply for the program to improve their resumes. I certainly noticed many behaviors by TFI teachers that appeared to be deviant, which could potentially be explained by misplaced interests on their part. However, I did meet some TFI teachers who previously had high-paying professional jobs and applied for TFI because they
wanted to do something more impactful. These teachers have since finished their two-year tenures at TFI and are now working in various education-related organizations (none have direct contact with students, though).

Aspire teachers can add to their resumes that they have been part of an innovative NGO program that provides strong mentorship, equipping them to be competitive for jobs at high-achieving government or private schools (which do not cater to poor students). Whereas TFI teachers tend to be young adults from a variety of fields of study and uncertain future ambitions, Aspire teachers have chosen teaching as their profession. Multiple Aspires told me in conversations that they intended to work for Aspire for a few years and then find regular teaching jobs. Aspire may be serving the latent function of taking these otherwise-average teachers and preparing them to get jobs at richer schools.

SEF of course only had one teacher, who was also a co-founder, at the time of my fieldwork, so there are no teacher training mechanisms. However, this issue may also emerge as a concern as SEF grows and adds staff members. SEF leaders may find that applicants to teach at their school or work in their Kashmir project may only be interested in working for short periods of time to benefit their own professional development, rather than staying for longer to create sustained impact on students.

There are also some potential latent functions that relate to the interactions between teachers and students. TFI students see the very same teacher(s) every day for two years. At the end of those two years, they get another TFI teacher(s) for two years. Therefore, students in the TFI program have constant interaction with and access to NGO teachers who have the same TFI 204

204 Due to Aspire’s “tight” management strategies.
training and who can be expected to treat them well. It is reasonable to hypothesize that having this constant presence of at least one role model in the classroom is a positive latent function of the way the TFI intervention is structured. SEF students also may benefit from this same function because their teacher has continued to be the same person ever since the organization began its operations. Aspire students by far see the most variation in teaching personnel. They spend part of the day with their regular government school teacher and part of the day with an Aspire teacher who is not necessarily always the same person. So it could be argued that while Aspire students do stand to benefit from the content of Aspire’s intervention, it also has the latent function of disrupting the schedule of the students to some degree. Of course, it is unclear if these particular latent functions have any impact on the students.

Finally, there are some possible latent functions of the partnerships in question at the administrative level. As explained in Chapter 6, a few interviewees had witnessed corruption or the potential for corruption emerging out of NGO-government education partnerships. While I have no evidence to suggest that these are or are not occurring in the three cases I studied, in instances where they do occur, government officials and NGO administrators could potentially be receiving durable goods or money that is meant to go to students.

While it is important to investigate whether the NGOs are maximizing their manifest function as a top priority and not wasting resources on unwanted latent functions, I am reluctant to make a judgment about whether these latent functions are good or bad. Many arguments can be made in either direction. For example, on one hand, professional development for teachers could be good as long as a significant percentage of them go into development or education fields and help the poor. On the other hand, the money used for professional development could
just be reallocated directly to the students in a more direct way, especially when the content professional development given to the teachers is not even centered on pedagogy.

**Implications for combating inequality and poverty in India**

In the introduction of this dissertation, I briefly discussed the potential connection between school-level instructional practices of teachers, the learning outcomes these practices can lead to, and the high levels of inequality found in Indian society. Now, having presented my findings in the previous three chapters, I can more explicitly address how my research relates to inequality and poverty in India. My findings uncover phenomena and characteristics at the school level that serve to either strengthen or weaken hierarchies amongst the students. In other words, some instructional practices help level the playing field for all students while others either keep the playing field uneven or make it even more uneven that it already may be. My findings also have implications for the management of the government school system and how it can become more effective.

One finding of Chapter 4 is that TFI and mainstream government school classrooms suffer from the *syllabus problem*. This means that teachers must proceed with teaching curriculum to students according to a fixed schedule, regardless of whether that schedule (speed of learning new material) is appropriate for the students. Based on my observations, the syllabus problem contributes to inequality within TFI and government classrooms because some students are able to keep up with the pace of instruction and benefit from it while many others are not. Taking this one step further, if students go through primary school without achieving adequate
fundamental abilities in the curriculum they are expected to know, by the time they reach secondary school, they will be in a weaker position to graduate and/or go on to college. These students will then face harder circumstances in the labor market or when getting married than they would have if more time had been spent at the primary level on mastering fundamental knowledge.

The main finding of Chapter 5, that government teachers discriminate between learning and non-learning students while NGO teachers do not, very clearly has implications beyond school for students and their families. This leads to a teacher-created hierarchy in students which has the potential to stay with them throughout their schooling and beyond. In essence, this sorting and discrimination that is occurring at a very young age or these students may lead some students to under-achieve in the future. In NGO classrooms where this discrimination is not observed, it is possible that students will be more encouraged to continue in school and not only learn more but also earn certificates for completing 10th grade, 12th grade, and even college, all of which would help improve their labor market outcomes. Therefore, this school-level phenomenon does potentially have noteworthy social and sociological importance. If this form of discrimination and labeling were to be eliminated from the school system, it could potentially reduce the number of alumni of the school system who end up in poverty.

Chapter 6 uncovers that NGO programs appear to grow if they have good relations with actors in the government school system at the administrative level, even if they are not able to demonstrate government teacher buy-in or that their (the NGOs’) students have superior learning

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205 Although one potential unintended consequence of the Aspire program could be that the students who are pulled out of their regular classes to work with Aspire teachers could become labeled as non-learning students in the same way that government teacher behavior is found to label certain students as non-learners.
outcomes. One broader implication of this findings is that programs and interventions may scale within the government school system even if they are not necessarily that beneficial for the students. This not only calls into question the planning that NGOs are doing as they scale, but also the way in which the government is evaluating programs and letting them into the system. The government has primary responsibility over providing education to Indian children. If decision-makers within the government school system make good choices, the system could help lift entire generations of students and their families out of poverty.

Recommendations and Concerns for NGOs and civil society

In this section, I present recommendations for education NGOs to operate more effectively and ensure or evaluate that their interventions are having long-term positive impact on the students involved. These include leveraging available human capital resources, which I call the young energy problem; following up to make sure alumni are successful in their adult lives; combatting the syllabus problem documented in Chapter 4; and increasing the availability of data and improving tracking mechanisms for NGOs to use to measure the quality of their work.

Box 7.2 - Additional recommendations for education NGOs

- Counter the young energy problem by partnering with other organizations and staying connected to developments in the broader education landscape.
- Follow up with graduates as adults on a regular basis and ensure smooth entry into college and/or the workforce.
- Combat the syllabus problem by seeking out opportunities to modify curriculum such that it is appropriate for student learning levels.
- Devote resources to collecting organized data on student progress on a regular basis.
Young energy problem

The three NGOs that I studied are all at different stages in their evolution but they all want to scale up to be very large eventually. They are all organized and have a scale-up plan. Many of their staff members are young educators who are passionate about making a difference. But there are many other education NGOs that I visited or encountered which have been operating successfully for years or even decades, but their size stays the same. They often run one learning center or one small school. Furthermore, there are many young people who wish to be part of a movement to change education. These young people do often work for NGOs for small stints of time and are considering their options to contribute further. Multiple ex-TFI teachers that I met, for instance, have now started their own programs or NGOs to further contribute to the effort. However, overall, the small NGOs as well as the individuals conducting initiatives on their own are extremely scattered and disorganized. They are siloed from each other. This situation is what I call the young energy problem: the desire and person-power is there to provide resources for and accelerate current education change efforts, but the coordination and synchronization is missing.

Some additional observations from my time as a researcher in India help illustrate the young energy problem further. I frequently attended gatherings of educators or would-be educators of all kinds, especially during the earlier, exploratory phase of my fieldwork. These gatherings included education conferences, meetings held by incubators of for-profit education entrepreneurship, teacher trainings (for both government and non-government teachers), and

206 The personnel in these smaller, stable NGOs tend to be more heterogeneous in age and career. Retirees and middle-aged upper-class individuals who wish to be involved in philanthropy are often part of these smaller NGOs. Nevertheless, they are still part of those unconnected agents of change described in the “young energy problem.
organized weekly dinners that helped attendees incubate business or public service ventures. While I was merely seeking exposure to as much of the education landscape as possible, I encountered at these gatherings many people from a variety of fields and backgrounds, not just education, who expressed interest in getting involved in education initiatives. Many of them even told me that if I were working on an education project, they would be interested in getting involved.

Of course, I was simply doing my own research independently at the time and there was no way for others to be involved. Ideally they would have been plugged into some portal or network of organizations and initiatives that would allow them to get involved. Furthermore, there are large organizations that incubate education initiatives, such as Central Square Foundation or J-PAL. Such organizations could consider incorporating into their operations these stray, seemingly willing, and numerous would-be contributors. In this age of crowdsourcing and working on demand, there should be a way to leverage this additional workforce and talent. The aforementioned smaller yet established NGOs could also be included in such a network so that best practices could be shared and in turn distributed and scaled more efficiently. This young energy problem is actually a reason for optimism and hope because it has the potential to turn into a “young energy solution” with some coordination.

207 J-PAL is The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, which is essentially an incubator of large development interventions, has large operations in India, and devotes some of its resources to education initiatives.

208 It is as if legions worth of soldiers are scattered around the country, ready to join an army, but one has not yet been formed.
Ensuring stable livelihoods and integration into adulthood for alumni

The students targeted by the programs of these three (and many other) education NGOs all come from low-resource backgrounds. Their families are often in unstable financial, health, and residential situations. While the programs implemented by the NGOs may be effective in some ways and may be transforming their students into better thinkers and citizens, it is also important that these programs lead to upward mobility in the long run for the families of the students involved. At the moment, all three organizations are relatively young, with TFI being the oldest and closest to having alumni who are adults.

All of these organizations, once their students graduate, should implement follow-up programs to help these students either pursue higher education and ensure that they do not drop out or find stable work that allows them to live in stable, healthy conditions without fear of being displaced or going hungry. It would be highly undesirable for the students to receive these improved educations but then still fall victim to other socioeconomic factors. NGOs should regularly check on their alumni to learn of their status and help if needed. They should also consider instituting formal programs in which students receive vocational training (or are linked to already-existing vocational training options).

Another consideration related to adult alumni has to do with family culture and planning. The girls who study at SEF illustrate this clearly: They are extremely advanced compared to others from their backgrounds and are very capable of attending good colleges in a few years. They would perhaps even be some of the only ones (especially out of the girls) to do so from their neighborhood. The same is likely the case for many other girls who are students in NGO programs. However, in many Indian families, the norm is for girls to be married, stay at home,
and help run a household once they reach adulthood. The girls who are part of NGO programs and have the potential to go far in the labor market may also find themselves married early in their adulthoods and lose the opportunity to have other careers\textsuperscript{209}. NGOs should take this possibility into account and discuss with the parents and families of their students the costs and benefits of delaying marriage (or other norms within a given family that come along with adulthood) and pursuing other careers. Note that I am not advocating for all students to deviate from their family’s traditions just because of their additional education. I am simply 1) advocating for the thorough consideration of all possible options for children as they become young adults and 2) pointing out that the NGOs in this study and others like it are in a position to help make this happen.

\textit{Combatting the syllabus problem}

In Chapter 4, and in the previous section of this chapter, I discuss the syllabus problem which occurs in classrooms with fixed (inflexible) curriculum. Out of the three cases studied in this dissertation, TFI is subject to this problem because it uses the same NCERT\textsuperscript{210} curriculum as government classrooms and is required to teach it to students at a predetermined speed. From all of my observations in TFI classrooms, it was clear that at least some of the students are left behind and there is nothing the teachers can do about it under the constraints of the content and schedule of the government curriculum. TFI is already highly integrated into the Delhi

\textsuperscript{209} This is of course the case for all girls, not just the ones who were part of an NGO program, and a society-wide issue that needs to be addressed on its own as well. The NGO students are simply focused on here because of their direct tie to the NGOs in this study.

\textsuperscript{210} National Council of Educational Research and Training, the governmental body that writes and distributes curriculum to government schools in Delhi. The textbooks used by government school students in Delhi are published by NCERT.
government school system and has full classrooms of its own, such that TFI students only encounter TFI teachers and programming (and none from the government directly). Furthermore, the program is designed such that TFI students stay with TFI for their entire school careers. Given that TFI has so much control over its students and is entrenched in the school system, it is perplexing that it does not have 1) control over the curriculum used in its own classrooms and 2) influence on the curriculum used in other government classrooms. TFI is large and engrained enough within the government system that it would be reasonable for it to make recommendations to government curriculum planners at NCERT and to expect those planners to take these recommendations seriously.

My recommendation is that TFI adopt the curricular approach of the other two NGO cases studied in this dissertation. Both Aspire and SEF use curriculum that is flexible rather than fixed in both its content and schedule, adapting to the specific learning levels and speeds of their students. During my fieldwork with TFI, I did not observe any reasons for which TFI could not implement a similar approach. TFI even has two teachers per classroom in many cases, as well as additional volunteers in some classrooms. In such settings, TFI could easily take an approach like that of Aspire, rotating groups of students through remedial classes to help improve their fundamental language and math skills.

All three NGOs in this study, as well as many others, should also advocate for the NCERT government curriculum to be flexible such that students who require remedial instruction and extra attention can catch up to the standards of their grade level. This is especially important because the RTE Act\textsuperscript{211} does not allow students to be held back in a

\textsuperscript{211} The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, also known as Right to Education Act, passed in 2009.
particular grade level. A second grader must graduate to third grade the year after. They cannot repeat the second grade. So even if this hypothetical second grader does not retain any curriculum from second grade, they will still go on to the third grade where they will not be in a reasonable position to learn much, since the third grade curriculum requires and assumes an understanding of the second grade curriculum. Therefore, the only way for this student to be able to catch up to the appropriate learning level for their age would be to receive additional remedial curriculum (whether in or out of school) that is different from the third grade NCERT material. NGOs should recognize and advocate for this in mainstream government classrooms. The NGOs in this study all have the opportunity to conduct this advocacy due to their ties to the government school system.

*Availability of data and tracking student progress*

The reason I based this dissertation purely on qualitative research is that reliable quantitative data was not available to help answer any of my research questions. Therefore, I was not able to conduct a quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of the NGO cases to supplement my qualitative findings. Instead, I conducted interviews or observation of the behaviors of students, teachers, and other staff to understand how the NGOs work and what happens when they go into government school environments. I am only able to guess about their quantitative effectiveness based on my observations of student work. Ideally, I would have had access to or the ability to easily collect controlled data that showed how effective these interventions are.

Students in these and similar NGO programs should be given short, carefully
administered math and reading tests two or three times per semester. The exact same tests should also be given at the exact same time to a control group government school students at the very same schools in which the NGO interventions are occurring. This control group will of course be made up of students who do not have any involvement with the NGO intervention. Then the progress of students can be compared over time by comparing newer test results to older test results for each student. Additionally, the impact of each intervention could be determined by comparing the results of the intervention students (those being taught by the NGO programs) to those of the control students. The ASER Centre conducts well-reputed tests across the nation using simple tests like the ones I am recommending (see ASER Centre 2017; pp. 28-34, 52-54). Education NGOs could easily write and implement similar tests in their schools and classrooms.

In addition to being written and organized in an experimentally sound manner, these tests also need to be administered in a controlled environment, in order for the data to be trustworthy. The following anecdote helps demonstrate the importance of this process: Before I began my dissertation fieldwork in Delhi, I initially was a participant observer and volunteer teacher at a rural school outside of Bhavnagar, Gujarat, exploring the possibility of doing my eventual fieldwork there rather than in Delhi. In the first few weeks of my time there, I attempted to administer a simple baseline math and reading test to the eighth grade students with whom I was working. However, I had already noticed that when I gave work to all 50 students to do on their own, without help from each other, they simply looked at each other’s work and copied. Then I decided that I had to take smaller groups of students and try again. So I took 12 or 13 students at a time to a separate, empty room. But again I could not get them, even with repeated requests (which sometimes escalated in their level of politeness), to work on their own.
Finally, even though the core of what I wanted to do with the students did involve a high level of teamwork, when it came time to do a baseline test, I was very concerned about students sharing answers and in the process tainting the data. I wrote a test very similar to that of the ASER Centre, took help from the school principal to check it and translate it to Gujarati so that all students could read it, formatted it very clearly, printed out copies at a print store, and came to school. I decided that I needed to take extreme measures to prevent cheating. I went to an empty classroom and took just five students along with me. I assigned four students to sit in the four corners and put one student in the very center of the room. I figured that if I just used these five spots in a classroom, there would be enough distance between the students. Once the students were seated with a writing surface and pencil, I gave each one the test. But I found that the moment I turned my head towards one student, the students that I could not see would confer with each other. Sometimes a student would get up and quickly run to the other. Other times they would signal or whisper with each other. I ended up scrapping my baseline test initiative.

Many other educators I have spoken with have had similar experiences with their own Indian school students. I also observed instances of such behavior during my observation time in Delhi\textsuperscript{212}. It appears to be part of the culture of learning in which the students have grown up. I included this story to point out the need for the process to be conducted very carefully\textsuperscript{213}. One person cannot go in and do it on their own. There needs to be an evaluation team which can arrange and monitor the students appropriately so that the results are trustworthy. NGOs such as TFI and Aspire definitely have the resources to do this and would benefit immensely from

\textsuperscript{212} The reader may recall a teacher quoted in Chapter 4 who referred to exams at his school as “A cheating carnival.”

\textsuperscript{213} Note that the ASER Centre chooses to conduct its tests exclusively in households rather than at schools (ASER Centre 2017, p. 27).
having this data\textsuperscript{214}. It would not even require a huge sample of students to be useful. NGOs conducting education programs and interventions need this data for many reasons: to test the effectiveness of their programs, to track progress of students, to show funders and potential funders of the value of these programs, and to encourage others to use similar pedagogy to achieve similar results.

**System-wide observations and recommendations**

Even though it was not the direct focus of my dissertation, I address some bigger-picture concerns and recommendations about the education system in India in this section. These include recommendations for the government school system, families, and third-party civil society actors or organizations. More specifically, this section includes discussions of the accountability of government personnel, potential that the government system has to make simple changes that could have big impact, motivations that families may or may not have given the lengthy time between investment and return in education, and inequality in the learning levels of students.

**Government accountability and potential**

One of the biggest problems in the education system, especially in India and potentially

\textsuperscript{214} Note that both of these NGOs were in the process of collecting and compiling data sets on student outcomes at the time of my fieldwork, but these data sets were not complete or ready for use by the time I completed my research.

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worldwide, is a lack of motivation and lack of correctly aligned incentives. This is the case both from the perspective of the supplier of education (the government) and the consumer of education (students).

Most teachers don’t care. It is quite natural to conclude this after even a day of observation in a Delhi government school. Teachers come to school, fill out some paperwork, write some text on the board for students to copy, collect their paychecks, and go home. This hypothesis about government teachers has to be confronted head-on and openly in both research and practice. While it is true to that their situation is complicated, they do not receive thorough training, and they are not mentored properly, there is also truth in this statement. Maybe they did care at first and now they do not. Or maybe they never did. But at the moment, whatever the underlying causes may be, the result is that many teachers do not care about learning outcomes and are not motivated to make changes in their work to improve these outcomes for children. The question of whether it is their fault is more interesting and useful. Government teachers are forced to do vast amounts of paperwork and other administration to keep their schools running. There is no separate administrative staff for these logistics. Therefore, the government teachers are forced to spend time away from teaching in order to accomplish these other tasks. However, some education experts have pointed out to me in conversations that government teachers only come to school for five hours per day, arriving and leaving exactly when the students do. Instead, they could stay after school for three hours (making for an eight-hour work day in total) to complete these additional tasks and just focus on teaching their students during the first five hours.

215 This appears to be a worldwide problem as well.
This example of staying three extra hours shows that some of the changes would not be
difficult to make. Right now, the heavily-followed norm is that the school gets shut down and
emptied of all people at the end of the five-hour school day, so everyone follows it. If the
government were to tell all headmasters that teachers are now required to stay at school each day
for even one or two additional hours, headmasters, fearing for their jobs, would likely start
enforcing this rule. The government also could put other measures into place to motivate
teachers and hold them accountable. For example, since teacher absenteeism is such a problem,
schools could simply require that each teacher takes a picture of themselves in the morning and
send it via Whatsapp to a particular number, where a district official will receive the pictures and
use them to take attendance. Most of the teachers use Whatsapp avidly and have phones that
have this capability. This would be easier than installing biometric clocking machines in each
school (or repairing the out-of-order ones that are already there in some schools). This system
could similarly be used to clock out: teachers would have to submit a photo of themselves before
they leave school, which would allow the recipient to know the time at which they departed. To
turn this system into an incentive, attendance could simply be tied to a monetary bonus. A certain
part of the teachers’ monthly salary could be moved into a conditional attendance bonus, which
is only earned if attendance is above a certain level.

In addition to improving teacher attendance, the government should also motivate
teachers, possibly with the use of incentives, to improve learning outcomes and classroom
engagement. This is obviously a very tricky proposition, because monitoring and evaluating
teacher efforts within the classroom is much harder than simply determining if they came to
school or not. Ideally there would be a trained mentor on site or rotating from school to school to
visit classrooms and help teachers cultivate methods that are effective. This way, the trainer
could monitor teacher work in a non-threatening way while also providing ongoing training.

Another strategy for getting more motivated teachers into classrooms is to change
existing selection mechanisms. It is engrained in the entire supply chain that becoming a
government teacher is a good job. This was told to me frequently in conversation. It is sought
after specifically for that reason: because being a teacher is respectable and well-paying. In fact,
many government jobs are known to have these benefits. Therefore, many families encourage
their teenage or young-adult children to join the ranks of the government, especially if there is no
other clear path to a stable livelihood (like joining the family business; getting a service industry
job as a doctor, engineer, lawyer, accountant, etc). Most importantly, entrance into government
positions is regulated by written exams. People can prepare for and take exams to determine if
they get a job. Exam performance alone, in many cases, determines who gets to go to school to
become a government teacher.

At training institutes, teachers do receive some training and practice with real students
(equivalent to “student teaching” in the United States), but their progress is still largely measured
by their performance on written tests. This is problematic because someone who does not have
any interest in teaching could be pushed into it by his family, pass all of the written tests,
graduate from teacher school, get a job as a government school teacher, and still not have any
aptitude or desire to be a teacher. But that does not matter to them and their family. It is a good,
stable job with high job security.

One way to combat some of these problems could be to get people who would actually
want to be teachers and enjoy the profession to go into teaching institutes. Practice teaching or at
least an interview could be part of the admission process so that those who are not well-suited for the job are less likely to apply. There are thousands of other government jobs for which they can alternatively take a test if they do not like teaching. Then, at the training institutes themselves, a more hands-on approach could be taken in which teachers practice more and take fewer tests. Mentorship from guest instructors from NGOs or other institutions could also be included in the curriculum so that teachers become exposed to multiple perspectives on teaching and learning.

**Student/family motivation and return on investment**

In addition to creating more accountability and motivation for teachers and other government personnel, more motivation is needed for students and families to believe and invest in the benefits of education. In education, the returns come too far after the investment. This not only makes families and students less motivated to maximize academic achievement but it also hinders the development and testing of changes in the system. Obviously, the “culture of learning” aspects of the school environment featured in Chapter 5 play a huge role in this. In a fun, active, engaged learning environment with a motivated teacher, the students will also be motivated. But without such environments being present within the government school system, other approaches need to be taken.

Most importantly, the benefits of education are only tangibly reaped when the student reaches adulthood. Until then, it is a big investment in time and resources with no immediate return. The return on investment is realized (if at all) much later. Right now, there is no connection for an 11-year-old student and her family between going to school today and having a better life in ten years, when that girl is a 21-year-old woman. If that girl does not go to school,
she can work as a maid or help her parents in their business to earn a little bit of extra money, which at times could be very helpful to the family. The government school system does provide a cash incentive for attendance to students in poorer social groups. However, this incentive is based on the students attending school rather than learning or engaging with the material. Furthermore, the Right to Education Act (RTE) only guarantees schooling through eighth grade, after which point students must gain admission into a secondary school in order to continue their schooling.

It would of course be unfair to modify this cash incentive such that it was based on test results (or partly on test results and partly attendance). But perhaps some other indication of student involvement or engagement, one that is fair to the student, could be built into the system. Then there would be a short-run return on the investment of sending a child to school and that child making an effort to learn.

Inequality in the classroom

In government classrooms in Delhi, as appears to be the case in many classrooms worldwide, there appears to be massive inequality between the highest and lowest achieving students. This was the case in every TFI classroom in which I conducted observations, even in grades 6-8, where the students have theoretically had TFI teachers for a number of years. This was also the case in every Aspire classroom. While I do not have quantitative data to demonstrate this inequality, it was highly apparent in my day-to-day observations. A good observed indicator of this is language skills. Even though instruction for a student’s entire school career with TFI is meant to be in English, it was clear that some students had picked up basic
English and others had not. In Aspire classrooms, students differed heavily in their Hindi reading and writing abilities\textsuperscript{216}. Much less inequality was evident at the SEF learning center, where essentially all of the students demonstrated a grasp of basic English.

Observed math ability is also a good indicator. When I circulated within the classrooms and talked with some students or looked at their attempts to solve math problems, it was very clear that some of them had learned basic math well enough to learn more and that others were far behind, not benefiting from the day-to-day instruction they sit through. In my role as a participant observer, I was very frequently in the position of helping students with or observing students work on math problems. Working with students on advanced topics like algebra or prime factorization usually revealed that students had not mastered more basic concepts already.

We do not know how this inequality in the classroom plays out for the students once they graduate and leave school. As stated before, it would be essential to compare NGO students at all learning levels to students from regular government classrooms at all learning levels, not just look at classroom versus classroom averages (though the latter would not hurt as a start).

Aspire responds to this heterogeneity by targeting only the lowest achievers in a school, while SEF spends extra time as needed doing catch-up work and often (especially in its first year in existence) divides its students up into a higher and lower group with separate curriculum. But TFI teachers have much less agency over addressing this problem. They are locked into a model that puts one or two teachers in a classroom with anywhere from 50 to 80 students. So even if there is one teacher per 25 students in the very best case scenario, it is impossible to cater to

\textsuperscript{216} Of course, Aspire’s intervention is designed to combat this inequality by acting as a safety net for students who are left behind. The structure of TFI’s intervention, however, does not include procedures for helping the weakest learners catch up.
lower-achieving students while still completing the syllabus.

The school of life and final words

While it may be a cliche concept, it is nevertheless critical to compare the “school of life” against school as an institution. Another story from my time at the government school outside of Bhavnagar illustrates this:

I was one day trying to teach an eighth grade student how to multiply. We happened to be in the school’s main office, where the principal sat. Since this office was right across the hall from the eighth grade classroom (and was itself the size of an entire classroom), we often used it when we needed more space for an activity. Wanting to involve a practical example that would also help my student visualize multiplication, I asked him to tell me how many tiles there were in the room in which we were standing. After hearing the question, he quickly ran to the corner of the room to start counting the tiles one by one.

I called after him to come back, “One minute, one minute. Come back. I’ll show you something.” When he came back to where I was standing and as a sheer coincidence, his father happened to walk into the office and walk up to us.

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217 All quoted dialogue in this story took place in Hindi and is translated.
218 The principal of the school, a very ambitious and benevolent person, involved himself wholeheartedly in development plans for the village and regularly met with the fathers of students in his office to discuss these and other matters. My student’s father had come to meet the principal that day and we happened to be in the office when he arrived.
“This is my father,” the student introduced me. The father greeted me warmly, after which I showed him what we are working on.

“Do you know how to figure out how many tiles are on the floor?” I asked the father.

“Yes,” he replied.

“Can you show your son how to do it?” I asked, after which he clearly agreed that this was a good idea and immediately started teaching his son the trick of multiplying the length by the width. Though I could not understand what they were saying in Gujarati to each other, I could see them pointing and counting the dimensions together.

Once they were done, I asked the father, “How did you learn this?”

Astutely recognizing that I was curious about whether or not he learned it in school and how he may have learned it otherwise, he explained, “I’m a farmer. I learned this while farming. I only attended school until the third grade and I didn’t learn much there.”

The story ends there. *The father had learned the multiplication trick from the school of life and he taught it to his son, who hopefully still remembers it, at school the institution.* I had multiple encounters on a weekly basis throughout my fieldwork which demonstrated that the school of life dominates school as an institution. I spoke with car and auto-rickshaw drivers about their gas mileage and monthly budgets. I spoke with shopkeepers about their stocks, suppliers, and the margins they make on each item. All of these people run successful businesses. They use their smartphones and WhatsApp in English. They communicate effectively, manage employees, support their families, and create complex budgets. And they never went to school. Their children are first generation learners.
The main point is that these students will learn what they need to know when they need to know it. So what is the job, purpose, or value-added of the school system and the NGO interventions that I studied in this dissertation, given that students will anyway learn from the school of life? This is of course a question with no single correct answer. As I see it, formal schooling, whether bolstered by NGO involvement or not, can 1) help place students on a superior path than the “school of life” path they would be on without formal schooling and/or 2) enhance a student’s “school of life path.” In scenario 1, a high achieving student in school can go to college and achieve a better position in the labor market than they would otherwise by becoming a highly skilled professional. This would be accompanied by benefits such as guaranteed upward mobility (potentially for an entire family), job and financial security, and improved health and living conditions. In scenario 2, a student would not be aiming to go to college and receive a white collar job. Instead, they would go into professions that are traditionally considered as unskilled, but that in reality do require a number of both traditional and so-called 21st century skills. A number of NGOs (separate from the cases studied) focus on vocational training to impart basic skills to young adults to make them more employable in blue collar professions.

As the three NGOs that I studied gain experience with students reaching adulthood, they may find themselves at a crossroads. They will need to examine how their alumni fare and use this information to decide whether to continue to invest in early childhood education and basic school curriculum or to partially reallocate their resources to help provide skills to their students that help them in the labor market as young alumni. My preliminary guess, based on observing and interacting with government school students of all ages over a sustained period of time, is
that alumni of these NGO programs will need additional mentorship in order to lead successful adult lives. Therefore, I highly recommend that all education NGOs keep well-collected data not only on their current students but also on their alumni. They should also put mechanisms into place for their alumni to come back to them when they need advice or have fallen upon hard times. Essentially, I propose putting into place a lifelong social safety net, even if doing so is resource intensive. I further recommend that the NGOs seek out other opportunities to self-evaluate and to prepare their students not just for passing board exams in 10th and 12th grades, but also for succeeding in their work, family, and health choices as adults.

These and similar well-reasoned steps should be essential elements of educational programs, especially given the stakes involved. Planners of educational programs and interventions should be both data driven and willing to change their models as they continue to work towards the ultimate goal of creating a healthier culture of learning for the youth of India who, at no fault of their own, have been born into situations of extreme adversity.

219 Ideally the government school system and private schools would do this as well.
Appendix..

Disclaimer about ambiguity: the reader should be aware that the word ‘principal’ can refer both to the P in principal-agent theory (PAT) as well as a school headmaster (school principal). In this appendix, ‘principal’ just refers to the former. School principals/headmasters will just be referred to as ‘headmasters.’

Principal-agent problems in conditions of low monitoring

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I review Principal-Agent Theory (PAT) as an important theoretical framework that is used in the literature to understand public-private partnerships (PPPs). The main findings of Chapter 5, that the government school culture of learning influences many of the behaviors of NGO teachers and that the latter are rarely able to successfully spread their own culture of learning to the students, show that modifications to PAT can make it more applicable to education PPPs. This appendix applies PAT specifically to the case of education PPPs and then examines how this modified framework of PAT can be used to analyze monitoring mechanisms within school systems.

_I contend that, in the case of an education PPP, the separate principal-agent structures within the NGOs and within the government need to be considered separately but in parallel in order to help understand the relationships between the two partners._ This modified PAT framework allows us to examine the mechanisms of monitoring that already do or could potentially exist between the multiple types of principals and agents, including continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE), weekly or monthly check-ins between teachers and managers,
parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), teacher meetings, all-staff meetings, and school management committee (SMC) monitoring of teachers. These mechanisms of monitoring are potential solutions to many of the problems presented in Chapter 5 related to the differences between government and NGO approaches to teaching and learning.

*Applying Principal-Agent Theory to Education PPPs*

Traditional PAT focuses on how *one* firm or organization has principals (like shareholders) who stand to gain or lose based on the organization’s performance and agents (such as paid workers) whose actions actually determine these outcomes. The principals therefore need to put monitoring mechanisms in place to make sure that the agents behave in a way that maximizes the outcome for the principals (Eisenhardt 1989, Fama & Jensen 1983, Jensen & Meckling 1976). For example, shareholders and CEOs (principals) of for-profit organizations need the organization to make as much money as possible whereas employees (agents) who simply work at the organization for a salary may not be incentivized to do this. The interests of each group is separate.

When considering how PAT can be translated to the case of educational PPPs in which NGOs partner with the government school system, both principals and agents need to be conceptually reconsidered. In PAT, principals are any entities that stand to gain or lose based on the organization’s actions. Agents are those who perform those actions. So for an educational NGO, those who stand to gain or lose based on the NGO’s performance are students, parents, and those who run the NGO at the top level\(^{220}\). If the NGO performs well, students will learn

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\(^{220}\) These entities could also be thought of as stakeholders within the educational system.
more and their (and their entire families’) long-term chances of having stable living situations and good labor market positions will increase. They stand to benefit in a very material way from the good performance of the NGO. If the NGO performs well, the founders and leaders of the NGO will have increased reputation and can expand the reach of their organizations to more schools, settings, and students. The agents of an education NGO are the program managers and teachers. Teachers, under the oversight of program managers, execute the NGO’s curricular plans. It is their actions that ultimately determine the performance of the organization as a whole.

Next, we need to consider how PAT would apply to the government school system. Many of the actors are the same or similar as the case above. Once again, students and parents stand to gain or lose based on the performance of the government school system. They can be considered stakeholders, shareholders, and principals in basically any educational scenario (unless there are monetary profits involved). Other principals within the government system are members of the bureaucracy above the school level. These civil servants are often officers who can get transferred from post to post on a regular basis. Their transfers often depend on their performance at their current post. Therefore, the performance of schools under their purview can have a direct impact on an officer getting a promotion or other favorable transfer or not. Agents within the government system are, as with the NGOs, the people who work in the schools and whose behavior causes the school’s performance to be good or bad. These are the school headmasters and the teachers who are permanently hired by the government.
Box A1 - Basic Principal-Agent Framework for Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals (stakeholders)</th>
<th>Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anyone who stands to gain or lose depending on the outcome of an educational program</td>
<td>Anyone whose actions determine the gains and losses of the principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>NGO teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Government teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO leaders</td>
<td>NGO program managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government officials</td>
<td>Government headmasters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

➢ The fate of the principals depends on the actions of other people, the agents. *
➢ Principals will, ideally, put monitoring mechanisms in place to make sure that the agents act in the principals’ best interests. **

This framework points out the definitions of and relationships between principals and agents in the education context.

* For example, how well a student (a “principal”) learns depends in part on how well a teacher (an “agent”) teaches her.
** For example, at monthly School Management Committee meetings, parents (principals) could ask for reports from teachers (agents) about their daily teaching activities to make sure they are doing their jobs well.

Box A2 - List of Principals and Corresponding Stakes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>The stakes (what they gain or lose based on the performance of the agents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Upward mobility, opportunity to attend better schools and college, better marriage prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Upward mobility, increased social status, stable old age, ability/incentive to send more children to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO leaders</td>
<td>Reputation, ability to expand and attract funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t officers</td>
<td>Resume improvement, job promotions*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list includes all of the relevant principals in the principal-agent framework for education and summarizes the stakes for each one, meaning specifically what they stand to gain or lose based on how the agents (teachers, managers) perform in school.

*If the PPP, or any other educational process under their jurisdiction, goes well, it reflects well on the officer.
Most importantly, in all cases -- whether government, NGO, or for profit firm -- the fate of those who stand to win or lose, the principals, depends on the actions of other individuals, the agents, who have their own incentive structures and may not be motivated to maximize returns for the principals. As the evidence presented in Chapter 5 shows, there is a discrepancy between what is best for the principals and what the agents actually do. A simple example of this is that teachers (agents) often do not teach in a way that is most effective to maximize learning outcomes for the students (principals), examples of which are presented earlier in Chapter 5. It is also important to note, as Entwistle (2005) does, that principal-agent problems are more drastic when there is no “concrete service output” and rather “softer, more intangible, aspects of service delivery” as the output of the partnership. The latter is certainly the case for the situation at hand, because it is difficult to measure the quality of service delivery in education.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, NGO teachers do show that they care about learning outcomes much more than regular government teachers, but they still adopt some negative aspects of the government school culture of learning. These behaviors include starting class late, being absent from school, and failing to check student work carefully (the latter of which is addressed in Chapter 4). Furthermore, many aspects of government school culture is out of their control, such as when others come to their classrooms and interrupt or when lunch/recess breaks do not end on time. Within the government system, while teachers do show evidence of caring about students’ well-being and safety, there is nothing to suggest that they care much about the learning outcomes of their students as well. Those who can learn do learn, while those who cannot learn do not learn.
In response to existing literature, my findings show that the PAT framework does apply well, but for a PPP, we need to make separate, parallel classifications for the public (government) side and the private (NGO) side. The principal-agent framework needs to take into account multiple types of principals and agents. Furthermore, the theory needs to recognize that it is not possible for all principals to monitor all agents in a straightforward way. Each principal will need to monitor each agent in a specific and nuanced way.\footnote{221 It is important to keep in mind that for some PPPs, a more appropriate framing would be to consider even NGO leaders (or their equivalents) to be agents as well. For example, consider if the government hires a construction company to build a park. Then the government (and the people) is the principal and the company is the agent. Within the construction company, there will also be owners/officers who are principals and workers who are agents. The goal of the owners/officers is for their company to satisfy the government in order to get paid. But in the case of the education PPPs under consideration in this dissertation, the NGOs have their own, \textit{independent} goals beyond just carrying out a service for the government and being paid for it. That is why NGO leaders are treated as their own type of principal at the same level as government officials in the model presented in this chapter.}
This diagram shows the two parallel systems of principals and agents in the NGOs and government. It also includes the important external principals, the parents and students, who are not formally part of the NGOs or the government but who are principals in any scenario involving education. Most importantly, the diagram shows that there is currently not much monitoring taking place. The various actors involved are taking a “live-and-let-live” approach to being part of the same educational process. They keep to themselves as much as possible and stay uninvolved with the other group’s business as much as they can. The partnership between NGOs and the government school system clearly features two parallel systems without much meaningful monitoring or even interaction.
Implementing monitoring mechanisms

One of the main recommendations of PAT, which applies across many situations, is that principals need to implement monitoring mechanisms to check, manage, and control the behavior of their agents. In the cases of Aspire and TFI, the two cases in this dissertation that partner with the government system in Delhi, there is a lack of monitoring. Without strong monitoring in place, NGO culture loses out to government school culture. But this lack of monitoring shows that some principals (like government officials) do not really care that much about outcomes at schools while other principals (like students and parents) do not have the power or knowledge to put monitoring mechanisms into place.

In addition to serving as a framework for understanding the relationships between the various actors in the NGO and government systems, the modification I propose to PAT also illuminates the potential channels of monitoring that the multiple types of principals can use to monitor the multiple types of agents. Box A3, “Parallel principal-agent framework and monitoring mechanisms in education PPPs,” shows the entire framework, showing parallel principal-agent dynamics within the two systems (NGO and government) as well as the currently-existing and possible-in-the-future monitoring mechanisms. There are NGO principals (CEO, founders, administrative staff), external principals (students, parents), and government principals (officers). Then there are NGO agents (program managers, teachers) and government agents (headmasters, teachers) whose actions impact outcomes for the agents. The solid and dotted lines denote existing and potential mechanisms of monitoring, respectively. Box A4, “List of monitoring mechanisms and their effectiveness,” includes all of these mechanisms as well as their definitions and effectiveness.
Based on my observations, there are no strong monitoring mechanisms in place right now within the system of government schools. The strongest and most effective one that exists is the weekly or monthly check-ins between program managers and teachers within TFI and Aspire as well as the reporting from the program managers up to their superiors. As shown in Chapter 4, this mechanism is stronger within Aspire and weaker in TFI. The strength of this monitoring mechanism means that top-level administrators in TFI and Aspire are aware of the challenges that their teachers are facing, but it does not mean that they are able to do anything about them. The challenges faced by NGO teachers are largely due to the government school culture of learning and corresponding behavior on the part of the government agents, the headmasters and government teachers. And there are no monitoring mechanisms between NGO principals and government agents, even though their work is so closely connected. Without such mechanisms in place or a change in the culture of learning, NGO capabilities will always be limited.

Regarding mechanisms through which government teachers are monitored, even those that exist are not particularly effective. As a result of the 2009 Right to Education Act, all schools have to maintain an active School Management Committee (SMC) and participate in “Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation” (CCE). SMCs are comprised of parents and teachers and are meant to meet once per month to help manage the school and keep parents in touch with day to day happenings at schools. Parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) are also meant to take place once per month. However, NGO members working in government schools from TFI and Aspire told me that they are rarely conducted, and when they are, they are just for the teachers to obtain a signature from the parent to show that the meeting occurred rather than to have any productive discussion. I followed up with specific interviewees to learn more about
PTMs. Here is a conversation I had with a TFI teacher at TFI School B over text messages on WhatsApp regarding PTMs:

Researcher: did you have PTMs with your students during TFI? And do the regular government teachers have PTMs with their students?

Teacher: At least in Delhi, all govt. teachers are asked to have at least 1 PTM per month. Many schools don't follow it of course. We also were pretty irregular but tried to have at least 1 PTM in 2-3 month.

Researcher: Okay. What about the government teachers at your school? Also one every 2 to 3 months?

Teacher: In 2 years I never saw the government teachers of my school conduct any PTM.

And here is a conversation about PTMs with an Aspire Program Manager who supervised at Aspire Schools A and B, also over text messages on WhatsApp:

Researcher: are there PTMs in the aspire government schools?

Program Manager: Yes. PTMs are there everywhere.

Researcher: ok. do the regular government teachers have PTMs with the parents?

Program Manager: Yes. They have... because its official for them to conduct.

Researcher: okay, and they meet and actually discuss their child's progress with the teacher?

Program Manager: Yes. But that is not a nice way of doing things. Its like a blame game mostly turns out to be. Most parents though agitated do not speak up fearing childs future.
Researcher: i see; what are they agitated about?

Program Manager: Childrens low quality education

Researcher: okay. are there any benefits of the PTMs?

Program Manager: Definitely there cld be, if both teachers n parents agree to work together

Researcher: how long are the PTMs currently? and how often do they happen?

Program Manager: Mostly these are for the sake of conducting n getting signature from parents

Researcher: so the parents come to school, find the teacher, sign the paper, what else?

Program Manager: Yes. If all things to happen well, i mean discussion n all then there would be no need of aspire na.

Researcher: yeah exactly. also how frequently do the PTMs currently happen?

Program Manager: That i have to get it confirmed

Researcher: ok

Program Manager: Frequency is much low

Researcher: Did you actually see the government teacher PTMs taking place?

Program Manager: Very rarely. But have not waited n watched. Usually they say children to call their parents n come.

Researcher: So the parents can just come anytime?

Program Manager: Mostly they do it for sake of doing. Get parents signature as a proof they have conducted. They take signature at any time even during a normal day to show that ritual is over. But i have seen ptm at [Aspire School D], parents gathering well. But [Aspire School D] is a better school. I mean parents r comparatively well off there. [Aspire School A] too is a well off school. But rest of the school extremely poor children study mostly. Mothers will be domestic
 helpers. Father too will be mostly a daily wage earner or meagre income earner. For those people opportunity cost to attend these will be extremely high. I mean rest of schools aspire was working with at that point of time.

Clearly, accounts such as those above from teachers, in addition to the lack of visible parent presence in schools throughout my fieldwork, suggest that parents are not enfranchised at the government schools that their students attend, whether in PTMs or SMC meetings. Even when they do come to school for a PTM, they apparently feel intimidated and constrained to speak up about any grievances they may have or to ask any questions that would lead them to learn more about their children’s schooling. And as the Program Manager pointed out above, parents of government school children do not appear to have enough free time to be involved at school, instead needing to focus on keeping their families financially afloat. Therefore, at the moment, monitoring mechanisms that involve parents do not seem feasible.

The CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) monitoring mechanism is, in theory, a useful one, but many teachers do not take it seriously. I ascertained this through interviews with NGO teachers and government school headmasters. CCE is mandated by the 2009 Right to Education Act and requires that teachers fill out evaluations for each student on a regular basis throughout the term. These evaluations can be reviewed by district officials to monitor the work of teachers and the progress of students. Many of these interviewees informed me that teachers simply fill out the CCE paperwork as a bureaucratic procedure and do not give individual attention to each student’s progress. In fact, there is no evident regular tracking of individual students throughout a semester in the classrooms of regular government school
teachers. There is no documentation that can be examined to accurately see the ongoing progress of a student. At the end of each semester, there are board exams which all students have to take. But even these, in all cases except the very final years of a student’s school career (when the exams count towards college admissions and third party officials come in to administer the exams), are all graded by the classroom teachers themselves. I had the chance to observe grading sessions with TFI teachers at TFI Schools A and B, as described in Chapter 4. The TFI teachers did not grade with much attention to detail and were forced to give higher marks than deserved due to requests from headmasters. There was also no observed habit of students reviewing the graded exams afterwards and asking questions about the answers they missed.
### Box A4 - List of monitoring mechanisms and their effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring mechanism</th>
<th>Currently in use?</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCE</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teachers are required to fill out evaluations for each student on a regular basis throughout the term, as mandated by the 2009 Right to Education Act. These evaluations go to district officials to monitor the progress of students and teachers.</td>
<td>Low: teachers fill out as a formality without taking it seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly or monthly check-ins</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NGOs have mandatory check-ins and reporting from the teachers to program managers and higher-up staff. Aspire has weekly check-ins and TFI has monthly check-ins.</td>
<td>High for Aspire, low for TFI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PTMs</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Periodic meetings between parents and their child’s classroom teacher.</td>
<td>Low: meetings are quick and perfunctory; parents are afraid to voice their concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher meetings</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Small meetings <em>between</em> NGO and government teachers, so that each group can monitor the other. TFI never holds such meetings. *Aspire’s planning does call for them and they are especially meant to happen at Aspire School A, but serious meetings to discuss teaching and learning do not occur.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-staff meetings</td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Meetings with all of the teachers in a school (both NGO and government) as well as the headmaster, allowing NGO and government teachers to monitor each other. *Similar meetings are held in some Aspire schools, but never to discuss teaching and learning, just logistics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SMC monitors teachers</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Parents, already organized together by the SMC, could ask for regular reports and documentation from teachers to show what they are doing on a daily basis with the students. They could also ask to see the CCE reports and demand that teachers take them seriously.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list describes all of the possible monitoring mechanisms, both those currently being used and those that are not, in the NGO and government systems when the two parties are working together. It also evaluates the effectiveness of these mechanisms in practice. Overall, even the monitoring mechanisms that are in place are more perfunctory than useful.

CCE = Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, PTMs = parent-teacher meetings
SMC = school management committee, like a parent-teacher organization in the United States
Conclusions and Recommendations

The modification of principal-agent framework detailed above helps point out the current and potential monitoring mechanisms within the whole system of the partnerships between education NGOs and government schools. Putting strong monitoring mechanisms into place so that each type of principal can monitor each type of agent is imperative to improving learning outcomes for students. Box A5 shows recommendations for education NGOs partnering with government schools and measures that students and parents can take to start to change the culture of learning in schools, hold teachers (of all kinds) accountable for what happens at school, and also put structures into place to support teachers.

Box A5 - Recommendations for government school students and parents

✓ Use SMCs or a separate parents group to collectively organized and stand up for prioritization of learning outcomes rather than discipline.
✓ Become familiar with the 2009 Right to Education Act, which spells out rights that parents and students have at schools.
✓ Take advantage of the Right to Information Act to request details about daily operations at government schools.

Finally, there appears to be a severe lack of observable monitoring between students, parents, and the processes occurring in government schools. In education circles in India, these issues are widely known and discussed\textsuperscript{222}. Parents do not have time to come to schools, often did not go to school themselves, and may feel threatened by the school environment. Having just a

\textsuperscript{222} These issues were discussed at two large education conferences that I attended, one in Ahmedabad in August 2014 and the other in Delhi in December 2014. These conferences included large numbers of private school leaders, teachers, and NGO personnel. They also had small numbers of government personnel and researchers. Parents and students were not represented (as far as I am aware).
certificate saying that you passed the 10th or 12th grade (which is not hard to achieve) can often be useful in the labor market, so families may choose to settle for these instead of fighting for improvements to the quality of education. These are just hypotheses for which I encountered some evidence, but rigorous research needs to conducted directly on parents to further understand these possible dynamics. The 2009 Right to Education Act tries to enfranchise parents at school by mandating that all schools must have an SMC and that teachers must hold PTMs once every month. These mechanisms are useful in theory, but in practice and for the time being, they appear to be ineffective. Parents will need to collectively organize, with the help of civil society, in order to put functional monitoring mechanisms in place and be heard within schools.
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