

By Sidharth Mishra



Education maketh a man, goes an old saying. In the current context we could say that good education makes good citizens for the country.

There is no denying the fact that any education should be founded on the few basic principles like the curiosity to search for truth or knowledge. Curiosity should be complemented by the desire to comprehend knowledge. In our ancient Indian tradition of Guru-Chela, the search for truth was through the process of academic rigour. There are questions about our traditions lacking in scientific temper; it was largely part of the British design to establish superiority of the western education pattern. But to give the British their due, they also did not dilute the process of academic rigour.

The biggest folly of today's education system is constant lowering of the benchmarks. To our generation and the generations before us, getting a first division was an attainment and getting a distinction (75%) marks a rare achievement. However, the standards have been lowered constantly on some pretext or the other but more often than not for the purposes of the political leadership playing to the gallery.

When education becomes part of political agenda and false narrative, it stains the upbringing of the whole generation. The announcement by Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia regarding the setting of a local examination board and delinking the government schools from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is a case in point.

There is a saying in English, you can't have the cake and keep it too. Sisodia recently claimed unprecedented 98 percent results by the government school in this year's secondary and senior secondary examinations conducted by the CBSE. Now there is no doubts about the CBSE, despite its shortfalls, being the most credible board in the country. So, if students are doing so well at CBSE, why have a local board.

Delhi Govt's Plan of Local School Board Would Lower Benchmarks

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The need for such a board would have arisen if CBSE was proving to be deficient in conducting examinations, failing to declare results on time, there being absence of a mechanism to redress grievances. No such charge has been made against the CBSE. The truth lies somewhere else.

Sisodia has been making false claims about the government school students doing exceedingly well in the CBSE examinations. According to data release by an NGO Praja Foundation, obtained through RTI, the pass percentage in the Delhi Government schools in class 10 examination has been gradually declining since 2012-13, when it was 99%, to 69% percent. The Delhi Government has not contested these claims as they are based on their own documents.

There are other claims and counter claims about the authenticity of Delhi Government school results. Let's make it clear that Delhi Government schools enjoy a rich legacy and every elected government, be the BJP or the Congress, have added to the process of improvement in the teaching-learning process at these schools.

The Delhi Government-run Pratibha Vidyalayas have been schools to reckon with for more than two decades now. The earlier governments took the challenges and never felt the need to lower the benchmark to make their students pass examination just because the political party can make some claims.

The AAP government in Delhi has for sure added fresh coats of paints to several existing buildings but they have been running Delhi Government schools with a stupendous vacancy of 24000 permanent teachers. Rather than investing in a local examination board, Sisodia would do better to consolidate on the rich legacy his government inherited.

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