

9th SCHOOL CHOICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

12 November 2017 | India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



Event Report and Proceedings



The [School Choice National Conference](#) (SCNC) is our flagship annual conference on education policy that brings together educationists, policy influencers, edupreneurs and investors each year, to dialogue on policy solutions for promoting educational access and quality in India.

An Overview

The 9th edition of the School Choice National Conference addressed the theme of *Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) in Education* through dedicated panels on the concept of, incentives for, and challenges to the implementation of DBT in the Indian context. Recognising the relevance of DBT in empowering parents and enabling greater choice of access, the conference sought to mainstream the dialogue on DBT with a particular focus on the relevance of DBTs as a policy solution to India's continuing crisis of accountability and efficiency in education delivery. With over 200 participants, the conference was held on 12 November at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi.

This year, in partnership with [Gray Matters Capital](#), we also launched the first edition of the CCS-GMC Annual Lecture Series. The lecture series has been conceptualised as an initiative dedicated to connecting education thought leaders and experts with school leaders from budget private schools, to build a dialogue on the distinct challenges of and solutions to education practice in low-income, affordable private schools in India. The SCNC also saw the screening of the winning entries to [EduDoc 2017](#) – our international short film competition that brings into the spotlight, stories from edupreneurs around the world.

Session Highlights



The opening address to the conference was delivered by Parth J Shah, President, CCS, who introduced the concept of DBT in Education. His introductory remarks were followed by a comprehensive analysis of the model by Junaid Ahmad, Country Director (India), World Bank and our Keynote Speaker at the event. Dr Ahmad asserted the need for greater equity in education and stressed on the need to create policy reforms in the larger purview of an agenda that envisions the future of education in India by investing in the building capacity of states, fostering competitive federalism, and implementing programs that improve learning outcomes.

Following the opening address, the conference also saw the launch of our Policy Blueprint on [Direct Benefit Transfers](#). The blueprint presents models of design and implementation of cash transfers for

primary and secondary education and examines the associated risks and benefits. The recommendations are meant to aid the government in identifying suitable methods for and the impact of cash transfers on educational outcomes.

The day-long conference comprised of three dedicated panels addressing fundamental concerns relating to the effective implementation of DBT in education, and its perceived outcomes:

DBT Experiments and Models: National and Global

Chaired by Shabnam Sinha, Lead Education Specialist in India, World Bank Group, our panelists for the session included Sarath Davala, author of *Basic Income: A Transformative Policy of India?*; P Priyatarshny, Director of Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Puducherry; and Shalender Sharma, Vice President, Education and Skills Development, IPE Global Limited. The panel addressed the challenges of present administrative capacities, monitoring compliance of the policy, institutional the mechanisms for fostering flow of information, and building a framework for impact evaluation. Building on their evaluation of pilot projects in Puducherry (DBT in PDS for rice), Madhya Pradesh (Universal Basic Income Pilot Study), and Orissa (Odisha Girls Incentive Program), our speakers addressed the failures of welfare delivery in India and argued for subsidiary policies to ensure a constructive shift from ‘kind’ to ‘cash’ transfers in welfare delivery.



DBT in Education: Incentives, Impacts and Issues



Our panel for the session included Gaurav Kapoor, Senior Head, National Skills Development Corporation; Kulbhushan Sharma, President, [National Independent Schools Alliance](#) (NISA); and was chaired by Seetha, author of *The Backroom Brigade: How a Few Intrepid Entrepreneurs Brought the World to India*. The panel discussion brought to light the larger question of State federalism and the need to provide autonomy to local governments for the success of DBT on a larger scale.

DBT Implementation Challenges: Design, Technology and State Capacity

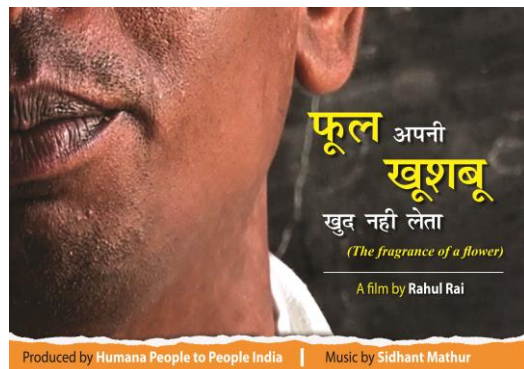


Chaired by Luis Miranda, Former Chairman, IDFC Private Equity and Chairman, CCS, the panelists for this final session included Bhuvana Anand, Governance and Public Policy Specialist; and Soumitra Mandal, Director, DBT Mission, Government of India. The panel discussed the shortcomings in the present infrastructure the need for efficient financial mechanisms, training and capacity building of agencies responsible for implementation, effective grievance and feedback mechanisms, and portability of schemes to

accommodate mobility of beneficiaries. Soumitra Mandal emphasised the relevance of DBT efficiently applied in Education, to also facilitate the effective identification of child labour, migrant children and school drop-outs; Mandal argued that DBT would also aid the monitoring of students to ensure holistic development (in terms of education and health); and create better learning outcomes by ensuring attendance through biometric mechanisms.

Edudoc 2017: Edupreneurs in the Spotlight

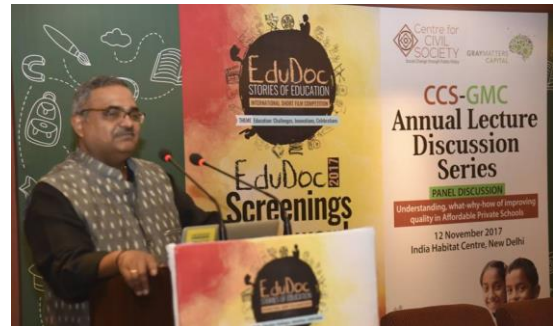
SCNC also saw the screening of the winning entries to [Edudoc 2017](#), our annual International Short Film Competition. The competition drew a marked participation this year, with 1924 entries from 111 countries. Our jury comprising of educationists, journalists and policy practitioners selected the top 5 entries which were screened as part of the conference. *The Fragrance of a Flower*, directed by Rahul Rai (Humana People to People India) won the top position in the competition. Rai's film narrates the story of Dashrath Kanade, a government school teacher in Pipliya (Madhya Pradesh), and celebrates his indomitable spirit, his simplicity, and perseverance to ensure quality education for his students despite the many challenges faced by them.



Watch the film [here](#). Other winning entries can be viewed [here](#).

CCS-GMC Annual Lecture: Innovations in Education

Launched at the 9th SCNC this year, the first CCS-GMC Lecture opened with the Keynote Address delivered by R.V. Balasubramaniam Iyer, Vice President, Reliance Jio. Mr Iyer discussed the scope of technological innovation in education that can create a plethora of opportunities for a learner-centric system. He emphasised on the exponential growth of information in the twenty-first century and the need to ensure mindfulness in students so they are able to keep pace with this globalisation of data. He also announced the launch of the e-edition of [NISA Namaskar](#), NISA's quarterly magazine, on JioMags, Reliance Jio's digital library. JioMags will make NISA Namaskar accessible to its 100 million users.



The following panel discussion brought together Chitra Ravi, CEO, EZ Vidya; Kulbhushan Sharma, President, NISA; Ashok Thakur, Founder and Principal, Muni International School; and Anurag Vaish, Co-Founder, Final Mile Consulting. Chaired by Ragini Chaudhary, CEO, Gray Matters Capital (India) the panelists discussed the need to foster educational leaders at the local-level, along with assessment reforms to create self-directed learners. As Anurag Vaish stated, “self-learning is different from self-studying, and the need of the hour is to create self-learners who can maintain pace with the exponential rate of globalization”.



Participation and Outreach

The 9th SCNC was attended by over 200 policy experts, education practitioners, researchers, journalists, and service providers. The conference panel discussions were also live-streamed on various social media platforms, reaching out to an additional 900 online participants with social media outreach of 125,000 users!

The event received 23 media citations with coverage in major dailies such as [India Today](#), [Economic Times](#), [Sunday Guardian Live](#), [Zee News](#), [The Indian Express](#), [NavbharatTimes](#), and [Business Standard](#)., among others.
