A Discourse Network Analysis of 2020 Democratic Presidential Candidates' Education Policy

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Abstract

This study aims to conduct a discourse network analysis of 2020 Democratic presidential candidates' education policy proposals. Given the far-reaching influence of presidential election on education policy, this study applies discourses network analysis to uncover education policy coalitions of the 2020 presidential candidates. The results suggest Joe Biden had the highest degree centrality, meaning his education policies were the same with or similar to many other candidates. Moreover, the Democratic candidates' proposed policies centered around school safety, universal pre-kindergarten programs, increased investment in school infrastructure, increased Title 1 funding, and free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public colleges. The findings provide timely insights into education policies over the 2020 presidential campaign.

A Discourse Network Analysis of 2020 Democratic Presidential Candidates' Education Policy

Purposes

The purpose of this study is to conduct a discourse network analysis of 2020 Democratic presidential candidates' education policy proposals. A total of 29 Democratic candidates announced their 2020 presidential campaigns. The public considers education as a top issue in the 2020 presidential race. According to the Gallop Poll conducted in December 2019, 43% of Democrats considered education as an extremely important issue, along with healthcare (49%), terrorism and national security (46%), and gun policy (44%). In comparison, 23% of Republicans considered education as an extremely important issue, along with terrorism and national security (38%), economy (30%), immigration (30%), abortion (28%), and gun policy (26%).

The Democratic voters' view of the importance of education was echoed by the Democratic presidential candidates. Both Sen. Kamala Harris and Sen. Bernie Sander declared that education is a fundamental right (Harris, 2019; Sanders, 2019). New York mayor Bill de Blasio proposed "a constitutional amendment to establish a right to an adequate education in America" (de Blasio, 2019). The mayor of South Bend, Indiana, Pete Buttigieg described education as a national security issue (Stoll, 2019). Many Democratic presidential candidates—such as former vice president Joe Biden, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren—released comprehensive education policy proposals that addressed education issues, ranging from teacher pay raise, Title 1 funding, IDEA funding, school safety, charter schools, to college affordability. The Democratic candidates had been eager to draw a clear line between themselves and the Trump administration as they articulated their education policy proposals. Given the far-reaching influence of presidential election on

education policy, this study examines the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates' education policy proposals by applying discourse network analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The analytical approach of discourse network analysis in this study has its conceptual roots in the advocacy coalition framework. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) argues that advocacy coalitions are forged by the policy actors who have similar policy preferences. The similar policy preferences function as the “glue” holding coalitions together. The differences in policy preferences are manifested in the discourse that serves to defend or propose coherent arguments as justifications for policy preferences (Hajer, 1993, 1995). In this study, policy actors were the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates. They reveal their education policy proposals to signal their policy preferences to potential allies, convince other actors to adopt their policy preferences, or reduce their uncertainty by learning from other actors (Clifton, 2004). For example, among the 29 candidates, Sen. Harris was the first presidential candidate to call for federal spending to raise teacher salaries (Hook, 2019). This policy preference was later supported by former Rep. Beto O’Rourke of Texas and former vice president Joe Biden. Moreover, Sen. Sanders proposed free tuition at two-year public colleges in his 2016 presidential campaign. His policy preference has gained traction since then, winning support from Biden, former U.S. Housing Secretary Julian Castro, and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii.

The interdependent relationships among presidential candidates and their policy preferences can be conceptualized as networks. As a result, policy discourse, in which policy actors articulate their policy preferences, tends to be structured around competing coalitions: the clusters of policy actors holding similar policy preferences and presenting similar arguments.

Figure 1

The Democratic presidential candidates—along with when they announced and suspended their campaigns.

	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20
Candidates																																		
John Delaney																																		
Andrew Yang																																		
Richard Ojeda																																		
Tulsi Gabbard																																		
Julian Castro																																		
Kamala Harris																																		
Marianne Williamson																																		
Cory Booker																																		
Elizabeth Warren																																		
Amy Klobuchar																																		
Bernie Sanders																																		
Jay Inslee																																		
John Hickenlooper																																		
Beto O'Rourke																																		
Kirsten Gillibrand																																		
Wayne Messam																																		
Mike Gravel																																		
Tim Ryan																																		
Eric Swalwell																																		
Pete Buttigieg																																		
Seth Moulton																																		
Joe Bidden																																		
Michael Bennet																																		
Steve Bullock																																		
Bill de Blasio																																		
Joe Sestak																																		
Tom Steyer																																		
Deval Patrick																																		
Michael Bloomberg																																		

Thus, if we can detect the clusters of policy actors based on their coherent arguments as justifications for policy preferences, we can then identify the coalitions in policy discourse.

Methods

This study uses discourse network analysis to examine education policies proposed by the 2020 presidential candidates. Discourse network analysis, built on content analysis and network analysis, is an emerging, alternative analytical approach to investigate policy discourse (Leifeld, 2017; Fisher, Leifeld, & Iwaki, 2013; Fisher, Waggle, & Leifeld, 2013). Here I present how the data on the presidential candidates' education policy were collected and analyzed.

Data Sources

To fend off misinformation, the primary data sources for this study were the presidential candidates' campaign websites, social media posting, interviews, debates, and the press coverage of their articulation of education policy proposals. The press coverage of the candidates' articulation of education policy came from national media outlets, including liberal (e.g., *The New York Times*), centrist (e.g., *Cable News Network*), and conservative (e.g., *Fox News*) sources.

Network Construction

To construct networks, the data were coded by which candidates proposed what policies. Figure 1 illustrates 29 Democratic presidential candidates—along with when they announced and suspended their campaigns. Yet not every candidate proposed specific policies that went beyond generalities like ensuring good education. Figure 2 illustrates the Democratic presidential candidates and their proposed education policies.

After coding which candidates proposed what policies, two networks can be created. In the first network, nodes represent presidential candidates, and ties connect a pair of candidates who proposed the same policies. In this policy similarity network, the thicker the ties are, the more same policies a pair of candidates proposed. In the second network, nodes represent policies, and ties connect a pair of co-occurring policies. In this policy co-occurrence network, the thicker the ties are, the more frequently a pair of policies were proposed by the candidates.

Network Analysis

The network data were visualized and analyzed by using network analysis software Gephi. Centrality measures were calculated to examine how central the candidates and their policies were. Modularity scores were also calculated to identify the sub-networks (also called

Figure 2

The Democratic presidential candidates and their proposed education policies.

communities, clusters, or groups). The nodes in the same module have denser ties to one another, but fewer ties to the nodes in a different module. Moreover, the changes of the networks were also examined as the candidates began to suspend their presidential campaigns.

Results

The Candidates' Policy Similarity Network

The presidential candidates' education policy similarity network is illustrated in Figure 3. In this network, nodes represent presidential candidates, and ties connect a pair of candidates who proposed similar or same policies. The thickness of ties represents the number of similar or same policies between the two candidates. Node size reflects the popularity of a candidate's

Figure 3

The presidential candidates' education policy similarity network.

Note: This network includes all candidates who proposed specific education policies that went beyond generalities like ensuring good education. Each node represents a candidate, and the node size reflects the popularity of a candidate's education policy among other candidates. Two candidates are connected if they proposed similar or same education policies.

education policy among other candidates, as indicated by degree centrality. Two node colors represent two clusters identified by calculating the modularity score. The nodes in the same color have denser ties to one another, but fewer ties to the nodes in a different color.

Since August 2019, candidates had begun to drop out of the campaign. Figure 4 illustrates the changes in the network over time as candidates dropped out of the campaign. By the end of March 2020, the Democratic presidential primary field had narrowed down to two

Figure 4

The presidential candidates' education policy similarity network over time.

End of August 2019

End of September 2019

End of October 2019

End of November 2019

End of December 2019

End of January 2020

End of February 2020

End of March 2020

End of April 2020

Figure 5

The education policies proposed by Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders by the end of March 2020.

Table 1 Candidate Centrality in the Candidates' Education Policy Similarity Network

Rank	Candidate	Degree centrality	Candidate	Betweenness centrality	Candidate	Closeness centrality
1	Joe Biden	105	Kamala Harris	4.4875	Kamala Harris	1
2	Elizabeth Warren	103	Julian Castro	4.4875	Julian Castro	1
3	Kamala Harris	100	Pete Buttigieg	4.4875	Pete Buttigieg	1
4	Bernie Sanders	99	Cory Booker	3.5670	Cory Booker	0.9545
5	Julian Castro	85	Amy Klobuchar	3.5670	Amy Klobuchar	0.9545
6	Cory Booker	77	Joe Biden	1.5875	Joe Biden	0.9545
7	Amy Klobuchar	70	Elizabeth Warren	1.5875	Elizabeth Warren	0.9545
8	Beto O'Rourke	68	Bernie Sanders	1.5875	Bernie Sanders	0.9545
9	Pete Buttigieg	60	Beto O'Rourke	1.5875	Beto O'Rourke	0.9545
10	Andrew Yang	58	Andrew Yang	1.5875	Andrew Yang	0.9545
11	Tom Steyer	46	Tim Ryan	1.5875	Tim Ryan	0.9545
12	John Delaney	36	Seth Moulton	1.1666	John Delaney	0.9130
13	Kirsten Gillibrand	34	John Delaney	0.8663	Bill de Blasio	0.9130
14	Tim Ryan	33	Bill de Blasio	0.8663	Eric Swalwell	0.8750
15	Eric Swalwell	33	Eric Swalwell	0.4872	Kirsten Gillibrand	0.8400
16	Tulsi Gabbard	32	Tom Steyer	0.4205	Tulsi Gabbard	0.8400
17			Marianne Williamson	0.0714	Jay Inslee	0.8400
18	Jay Inslee	23	Kirsten Gillibrand	0	Wayne Messam	0.8400
19	Seth Moulton	23	Tulsi Gabbard	0	Tom Steyer	0.7778
20	Marianne Williamson	20	Jay Inslee	0	Seth Moulton	0.7241
21	Wayne Messam	17	Wayne Messam	0	Marianne Williamson	0.7241
22	Michael Bennet	6	Michael Bennet	0	Michael Bennet	0.5833

candidates: former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Their education policy proposals were illustrated in Figure 5.

Table 1 displays the candidate centrality measures in the candidates' education policy similarity network. The bigger the centrality is, the more same policies were proposed by a pair of candidates. The top 10 candidates who proposed the popular education policies were: (1) Joe Biden, (2) Elizabeth Warren, (3) Kamala Harris, (4) Bernie Sanders, (5) Julian Castro, (6) Cory Booker, (7) Amy Klobuchar, (8) Beto O'Rourke, (9) Pete Buttigieg, and (10) Andrew Yang. Joe Biden had the highest degree centrality, meaning his education policies were the same with or similar to many other candidates. This finding may explain why he won the most delegates to secure Democratic nomination.

The Policy Co-Occurrence Network

The presidential candidates' education policy co-occurrence network is illustrated in Figure 6. In this network, nodes represent policies, and ties connect a pair of policies proposed by the same candidate. The thicker the ties are, the more same policies a pair of candidates proposed. Node size indicates degree centrality. The bigger the node size, the more frequently a policy co-occur with other policies. Node color differentiates clusters detected by calculating the modularity score.

In Figure 6, the policies at the center are closely connected to one another. According to the results of degree centrality, the top 10 most popular policies were: (1) Policy 36: increased school safety, (2) Policy 8: universal pre-kindergarten programs, (3) Policy 43: increased investment in school infrastructure, (4) Policy 45: increased Title 1 funding, (5) Policy 19: free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public colleges, (6) Policy 1: teacher pay raise, (7) Policy 44:

Figure 6

The democratic presidential candidates' education policy co-occurrence network.

increased funding for students with disabilities, (8) Policy 35: promote school desegregation, (9) Policy 42: close school funding gap, and (10) Policy 46: protection for LGBT students.

Increased school safety.

Many presidential candidates appealed to the public concern over school safety (see Figure 7). This is especially true since the deadly Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018. To increase school safety, many measures have been proposed, including counseling and mental health programs for students. In the Democratic presidential debate on June 26, 2019, former U.S. Housing Secretary Julian Castro said, “The worst thing is knowing that your child might be

Figure 7

The candidates who proposed to increase school safety.

worried about what could happen at school, a place that is supposed to be safe. The answer is no. We don't have to accept that" (NBC News, 2020). In the same debate, former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke shared that Santa Fe students and Rhonda Hart, a mother whose daughter died in the school shooting, were ensuring that "our values ... are reflected in the laws that we pass."

Moreover, many school safety policies were intertwined with gun policy. This is probably because 44% of Democrats and 26% Republicans saw gun policy as an extremely important issue (Hrynowski, 2020). Many Democratic presidential candidates discussed school safety in a way that drew a clear line from the current federal policy on school safety. In December 2018, the Trump's Commission on School Safety which recommended, "School

districts may consider arming some specially selected and trained school personnel (including but not limited to SROs and SSOs) as a deterrent” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 106). By contrast, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, introduced the School Shooting Safety and Preparedness Act (H.R.4301, 2019), which would require the Department of Education to publish an annual report on indicators of school crime and safety. Such a report shall collect specified information, including (1) the number of school shootings that have taken place nationwide; (2) the age, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality of each victim; (3) the motivation of the shooter; (4) how the shooting was stopped; and (5) the number and type of firearms and ammunition used in each shooting. Most candidates supported bans on “assault weapons” like the AR-15 a former student used in the Parkland shooting. In addition, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren called for federal funding for research into gun violence.

Universal pre-kindergarten programs.

The policy proposal of universal pre-kindergarten programs was also quite popular among the candidates. The candidates who proposed universal pre-kindergarten programs were shown in Figure 8. On July 27, 2017, the day before former representative John Delaney announced his presidential campaign, sponsored the Early Learning Act of 2017 (H.R.3466, 2017), which would require the Department of Education (ED) to fund pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds. The federal funding would come from 1.5% tax on annual income exceeds \$500,000. Universal pre-kindergarten programs were also supported by another candidate Julián Castro who joined the presidential race in January 2019, earlier than most candidates. Back in 2013 when Castro was San Antonio mayor, he successfully persuaded his voters to vote for a tax increase to fund an unusual preschool program for 4-year-olds from low-income families. Fast forward to his presidential campaign in 2019, Castro’s People First

Figure 8

The candidates who proposed universal pre-kindergarten programs.

Education plan proposed Pre-K for USA program which makes preschool universal for 3- and 4-year olds (Julián Castro, 2020). The Pre-K for USA program would be funded by a grant program to state and local governments.

Increased investment in school infrastructure.

The third most popular policy was to increase investment in school infrastructure (see Figure 9). On January 29, 2019, the Rebuild America's Schools Act (S.266, 2019) was introduced in Senate, which would fund \$70 billion in grants for long-term improvements to public school facilities (e.g., making major repairs of public school facilities and making public school facilities accessible to disabled individuals) by allocating funds to states for school

Figure 9

The candidates who proposed increased investment in school infrastructure.

improvements, awarding need-based grants to local education agencies, and restoring school infrastructure tax credit bonds. Among the co-sponsors of the bill, five were Democratic presidential candidates, including California Sen. Harris, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. Moreover, Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, also a candidate, co-sponsored House version of the bill.

In addition to co-sponsoring the Rebuild America's Schools Act (S.266, 2019), Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar proposed a \$1 trillion infrastructure program that would include resources to fix our crumbling and unsafe schools, update the physical and digital infrastructure

The candidates who proposed free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public colleges.

Free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public colleges.

Although college for free has been widely discussed by the Democratic presidential candidates, the word “free” carried different meanings. Among them, the policy proposal of free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public college gained the most popularity. When Sanders was running for president in 2016, he proposed tuition-free public colleges and universities. In the 2020 presidential race, Sanders introduced the College for All Act, which would provide \$47 billion a year to states to eliminate undergraduate tuition and fees at public colleges and

universities. To make it free, the federal government would cover 67% of tuition at public colleges and universities, while the states would be responsible for the remaining 33% of the cost. The bill in Senate was co-sponsored by Gillibrand, Harris, Swalwell, and Warren.

In comparison with the College for All Act, other bills that aimed to college affordability, gained less popularity. The Debt-Free College Act and the America's College Promise Act were co-sponsored by three Senators (i.e., Gillibrand, Harris, and Warren). Other candidates' proposal on college affordability was not so sweeping. Buttigieg proposed tuition-free college only for lower- and middle-income families.

Teacher pay raise.

Teacher pay raise was the top 6 popular education policy among the candidates. Although many candidates supported teacher pay raise, the extent of pay raise varied from candidate to candidate. Harris was the first to announce a plan of federal spending to increase teacher pay (Ehrlich & Grayer, 2019). She proposed to spend \$315 billion over ten years to give the average teacher a \$13,500 raise (Harris, 2019). "In America, public school teachers are paid about \$13,000 a year less than other college graduates. That could be mortgage payments or the cost of groceries for a family for a year. It's a national failure. It's time we give America's teachers a raise," Harris said on Twitter. To achieve it, Harris planned to work with each state to set a target goal for teacher pay. Then the federal government would provide 10% of the cost up front. After that, for every \$1 the state contributed toward making that goal, the feds would contribute \$3.

Sanders (2019) proposed to set a minimum \$60,000 starting salary for teachers. Sanders also proposed to triple the tax deduction teachers can take for spending money on their classrooms from \$250 to \$750. In a similar vein, Castro, whose father and wife were both public

school teachers, proposed to a federal tax credit that would increase teacher pay by \$2,000-\$10,000 a year, with teachers at high-poverty schools receiving larger credits.

Buttigieg proposed federal teacher pay raise—only for teachers in Title 1 schools. Steyer proposed to raise teacher pay by matching every new dollar states and districts spend to raise educator salaries with federal funds on a 2-to-1 ratio. Other candidates' plans were more ambiguous. Biden said teachers should have “competitive salaries.” O'Rourke wanted to “guarantee that no schoolteacher works a second or a third job.” Warren did not specify the amount of teacher pay raise.

Increased funding for students with disabilities.

Several candidates proposed to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. When Congress passed the original version of IDEA in 1975, it promised to cover 40% of the additional costs of educating students with disabilities. In 2018, the federal government covered less than 15% of these costs (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Delaney has repeatedly called for full federal funding for IDEA, suggesting in a 2014 letter to President Barack Obama that federal budgets should include incremental increases in special education funding until the goal is met. Sanders also called for fully funding IDEA.

Other candidates not only proposed fully funding IDEA, but also proposed expansion of IDEA. For example, Warren's (n.d.) plan called for the federal government's original 40% funding promise by committing an additional \$20 billion a year to IDEA grants. Warren also proposed to expand IDEA funding for 3-5 year olds and for early intervention services for

toddlers and infants. Sanders proposed to increase the federal IDEA funding from 40% to at least 50%.

Promoting school desegregation.

Candidates approached school desegregation differently. Being a former U.S. housing secretary, Castro approached it via housing policy. “We can’t have integrated schools if our housing and communities are segregated,” Castro said on his campaign website. Castro proposed a progressive housing policy that includes affirmatively furthering fair housing, implementing zoning reform, and expanding affordable housing in high opportunity areas.

Warren (2019) also included housing as a way to integrate schools. She proposed to commit \$10 billion in competitive grants that offer states and cities money to build parks, roads, and schools if they eliminate the kinds of restrictive zoning laws that can further racial segregation. Warren also proposed to revive and fund the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which is responsible for enforcing federal civil rights laws in our public schools, but OCR’s capacity has been limited under Secretary Betsy DeVos. Moreover, Warren proposed to scrutinize “breakaway” districts that are often wealthier and whiter than the district they leave behind and typically result in massive funding inequities between the new district and the old one. Both Sanders and Harris supported the Strength in Diversity Act (H.R.2639, 2019), which was introduced in September 2018 and would provide money to help school desegregation efforts and fund transportation to aid in desegregating schools.

Closing school funding gap.

Biden proposed to eliminate the funding gap between White and non-White districts, and rich and poor districts. Buttigieg proposed to create a \$10 billion equity fund that would support, test, and scale new practices and innovative policies to bridge the opportunity gaps that hold

back children from historically marginalized communities. Sanders called for “a fundamental rethinking of the unjust and inequitable funding of our public education system” (Sanders, 2019, para. 11). Klobuchar’s education plan asked states to review the existing funding formula to improve equity.

Protection for LGBT students.

Sanders proposed to pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act into law to protect the rights of LGBTQ students. “We must ensure LGBTQ students can attend school without fear of bullying, and work to substantially reduce suicides,” said on his campaign website. Warren (2019) announced on Twitter, “As president, I will not only fight my heart out for LGBTQ+ students’ rights, I will nominate a former public school teacher as education secretary. We need a leader who will actually fight for our kids,” At a campaign event, when asked how to make schools inclusive, Warren responded that she would appoint an education secretary who “is committed to creating a welcoming environment, a safe environment, and a full education curriculum that works for everyone” (Blad, 2020, para. 1). Like Warren, Buttigieg proposed to appoint an education secretary who is committed to LGBTQ+ equality. In addition, Buttigieg proposed one of the most detailed plan to protect LGBT students, including supporting the Equality Act to ensure non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people in education and other areas of life, supporting curriculum that recognizes the contributions of LGBTQ+ Americans throughout history, reinstating Obama-era guidance on the treatment of transgender students, including with respect to pronouns, restrooms, and dress codes, and promoting a greater sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ youth through his We Belong mentorship program.

Other policies.

In addition to the above 10 policies among the 29 Democratic presidential candidates, there were other education policies proposed to address an arrange of issues in education. They include, but not limited to, making systemic efforts to train, recruit, and retrain more teachers of color, ending standardized tests, expanding Pell Grants, increasing funding for historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions, and preserving DACA for current recipients and extending DACA's protections to their parents.

Discussion

The Democratic presidential candidates' policy proposals can have far-reaching influence on public discourse, policymaking, and implementation of education policy. A total of 29 Democratic candidates announced their 2020 presidential campaigns. In the presidential candidates' education policy similarity network, the top 10 candidates who proposed the popular education policies were: (1) Joe Biden, (2) Elizabeth Warren, (3) Kamala Harris, (4) Bernie Sanders, (5) Julian Castro, (6) Cory Booker, (7) Amy Klobuchar, (8) Beto O'Rourke, (9) Pete Buttigieg, and (10) Andrew Yang. In the presidential candidates' education policy co-occurrence network, the top 10 most popular policies were: (1) increased school safety, (2) universal pre-kindergarten programs, (3) increased investment in school infrastructure, (4) increased Title 1 funding, (5) free tuition and fees at 2- and 4-year public colleges, (6) teacher pay raise, (7) increased funding for students with disabilities, (8) promote school desegregation, (9) close school funding gap, and (10) protection for LGBT students. Most candidates announced their presidential campaigns in 2019. As most candidates began to suspend their presidential campaigns, the popular education policies stayed in the policy co-occurrence network, but the rest of the policies dropped out of the network as the candidates ended their campaigns.

Some candidates' education proposals were more extensive and detailed than others. On the one hand, Sanders' plan was one of the broadest plans to address education issues. On the other hand, some candidates' education policy proposals were notably short on policy details. Marianne Williamson proposed to invest and retain teachers, but was light on details of what specific goals were or how to achieve the goals. Yang announced on his campaign website that he would work with states to fund their educational systems to improve teacher salaries and reduce layers of administration, leading to better educational outcomes. But the website offered no details on how he would accomplish them. Several candidates have said they want to fully fund special education under Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. However, Warren was the candidate who specified how much it would cost in her administration.

Some candidates' bold visions and policies have a steep price tag. For example, the College for All Act, introduced by Bernie Sanders and co-sponsored by Kirsten Gillibrand, Kamala Harris, Eric Swalwell, and Elizabeth Warren, would cost \$47 billion a year in federal tax dollars to eliminate undergraduate tuition and fees at public colleges and universities. Sanders proposed working with states to set a minimum starting salary of \$60,000, adjusted for cost of living and years of service. In comparison, Biden's education proposal was more moderate. Biden proposed requiring the Title I spending increase to be used for higher salaries but did not offer a specific figure for minimum salaries or overall raises. To further complicate matters, given the cost, it will be more difficult to raise teacher salary raise amid the financial turmoil in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

It is a bumpy road of turning education proposals to policies under any administration. It takes sophisticated political skills for the executive branch of the government to work with Congress to pass legislation. Klobuchar said she was committed to proposing legislation in the

first 100 days, but was light on details of how to work with Congress to pass the legislation.

What the presidential candidates promised might not be turned into reality. After all, there is a difference between campaign and governance. Candidates used education to appeal to their voters. It remains to be seen whether Biden, the candidate who won the most delegates to secure Democratic nomination, would hold up its end of the deal in his administration if he won the presidential election.

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