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INTRODUCTION

Since the development of human capital theory with its ambitious and far-reaching claims to have identified a significant correlation between education and economic achievement, we have witnessed an unprecedented bevy of educational reforms, particularly in the developing world. These reforms have largely concentrated on curricular and workforce changes using evaluation processes and techniques, supposedly premised on national and international research findings. To the extent that the mechanisms responsible for implementing these innovations and changes are referred to, it is assumed that their success depends on a well-ordered and functioning educational administration free from interference. Superficially this has meant, firstly, paying lip service to the mantra that business models of management provide sufficient leverage to override 'outside interference', and secondly, it has been predicated on the unarticulated belief that national administrations are both efficient and neutral. However, this model has never operated in practice and the reforms both good and bad have rarely been successfully implemented.

This book examines the reasons for India's failure to bring these generally excellent proposals for reform and improvement to fruition. On the one hand, India has been particularly open to the suggestions and urgings of international organisations as to how to improve its educational performance. Yet, on the other, its system of administration vital to the possible success of implementing these reforms is closed and driven by internal conflict that has continuously paralysed all hope of delivery and effectively cancelled out changes initiated at the top level or originating from official international consultancies in which researchers from all over the world have often played an important role.

Obviously, these sometimes bewildering changes and processes have not enjoyed a good reception. Indian teachers and particularly those who have been in service over this entire period of frequent and hectic reform and who are on the receiving end of these initiatives, when asked what they think of them, interestingly comment much less on the actual content of the reforms, than on processes and their outcomes. A frequently expressed view is 'the more it all changes, the more it stays the same'. Questions we need to ask are why, and

hence how, do costly reforms fail in India, and what lessons for other countries can be drawn from an analysis of those experiences? What can our understanding of the reasons for the continual failure of reforms tell us about how to make them more effective? In other words, how can one rescue the core elements of useful reforms to make them reach, and work better at, the level of the school? These are the questions we will try to answer in this book.

It should be apparent that, to a large extent, we are referring to the failure to implement policy. Generally speaking the failure to implement a policy is often attributed to four major factors: the design of the policy itself is flawed (it is not coherent, well-directed and practical and does not mesh with others operating in the same field); the policy is politically and/or socially unacceptable; insufficient attention is paid to the process of communicating and delivering the policy; and there are inadequate conditions in the classroom and for the preparation of teachers in the implementation of the policy.

In order to address these impediments or failures to successful implementation it is necessary to address four facets or dimensions of the problem. The first of these is the structure of any new programme, i.e. its comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance. The new programme is composed of a set of elements arranged in a logically coherent way, i.e. arrangements of resources, functions and roles for stakeholders, and vertical and horizontal relationships between these allocations of resources, functions and roles. The programme has a causal narrative, that is, the productive practice, the focus of the reform, is such that a leads to b ; or the implementation of a in ideal circumstances leads to b_1, b_2, b_3 and so on. And the programme has a comprehensive and appropriate rationale (ethical, practical and consequential) and a realistic implementation plan. For example, in relation to pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula, it is important to develop a comprehensive set of curriculum standards and learning outcomes, syllabus content that extends from subject knowledge to developmental processes, a coherent structure of pedagogic standards or teaching and learning arrangements, and a strategy for involving educational reformers, policy developers and jurisdictional authorities in the process from the outset.

The second facet or dimension refers to the sites of implementation, how they are constructed and how they functioned prior to the new reform. The third dimension refers to how the current implementation site would need to be changed to accommodate the new initiative, and the fourth refers to issues of institutional structure, form and capacity at these sites. It is in the last of these – the institutional capacity – that we come across an issue that is rarely discussed in the relevant literature. In the literature on school improvement there are many examples of initiatives that flourished while support was being provided by an external agency or research team, but that withered when the external support ended, practice reverting to the status quo ante. Creating change in organisations is a complicated business, given that an organisational culture often exerts controls and deters change.

By institutionalisation we mean the degree to which the central activities, aptitudes and attitudes of the intervention become embedded in the structures and culture of the school, pervading the thinking and actions of teachers, administrators and students. Institutionalisation of the intervention is not guaranteed; the literature on organisational development and school reform suggests that there is a wide range of conditions in schools that can positively or negatively impact on the take-up, spread and depth of any reform, and that these conditions interact with one another and with reform efforts in complex, interactive ways.

Administrative Inertia

Writers who deal with institutional incapacity, and international and national policy-makers, refer to staff training and administrative reorganisation as if they are dealing exclusively with a technical problem that can easily be resolved by making the administration more responsive. Undeniably administration inertia is a problem because, by nature, administrations are resistant to change. To a certain extent, the modus operandi is to treat policy initiatives as occupational hazards to be neutralised as quickly and effectively as possible. However, the problem is more complex because administrations do not function in a void. They are predicated on social systems and processes that contextualise their work, including specific sets of epistemological perspectives, and these same systems, knowledge sets and processes are influential at every stage of implementation. This means that the administration is a reflection and a projection of the social order and must be understood as such.

What this means is that the comparative unresponsiveness of the bureaucracy to policy-making in developing countries is especially marked due, in part, to the relatively recent development of public systems of administration and the relatively late development of educational systems and their consolidation of the apparatus to implement policy. It may well be the case that the staff is insufficiently trained and administrative procedures and regulations are weak. In this sense we can talk about insufficient institutionalisation because the organisation cannot count on adequate human resources and administrative coherence. But institutionalisation goes beyond these aspects that are readily susceptible of technical resolution, that is, more training and bureaucratic reorganisation. Institutionalisation includes the degree to which the organisation manages to communicate its purpose and identity to its staff and its identity is more often than not distorted by the needs and actions of interest groups. The staff, in turn, respond to the incentives and sanctions that the institution operates in order to achieve its purposes. This is an important theme but it is only one aspect of a more general problem.

The crux of the matter is that the administrations of most developing countries are markedly different from the administrations of more developed countries

with their strong historically entrenched independent identities. The state apparatus in emerging political entities is likely to be under the control of the political groups or coalitions of interest currently exercising power and is often a site of both conflict and compromise amongst them. Its primary function is one of attenuation or control of the conflicts, the search for compromise and the control of the population as a whole. Under these circumstances the obstacles to an independent identity to carry out its designated purpose – education in our case – is severely circumscribed by what we can call power politics. This is especially true in India, where political stability has been achieved through corporate integration of all the major sectors and strata of the society. It has not been achieved by direct political control as in authoritarian states; neither have the counter-balances from plural democracies kept a watchful eye on the bureaucracy's accomplishment of its designated purposes. Indian corporative politics puts general loyalty to groups and individuals over and above the specific purposes of the organisations in which they operate.

Bureaucracies then, are also sites where political leaders and groups can provide positions for their supporters. To put it another way, the primary purpose of the educational administration is not to develop and/or implement educational policies, but to position leaders and groups using appropriate mechanisms to do so. In this sense the problem of reform implementation is not one of incapacity or disorganisation or of a lack of institutionalisation but an inability to focus on the prime concerns of an education system. Once we recognise that a significant part of the failure of policy to reach the schools successfully intact is the very modus vivendi of the administration itself, then it is equally clear that solutions will be difficult to find. Any attempt to instil the improvements contemplated within policies would involve challenging established institutional behaviours. This in turn would depend on the corporative distribution of personal and group loyalties changing, something we unfortunately and frustratingly are unlikely to see in the near future.

In this book we are interested in all aspects of policy implementation: pedagogical, organisational, resourcing and political–institutional. Critical accounts of policy developments and policy implementations in India will be used to demonstrate that we take particularly seriously the hitherto neglected category of institutional and political infrastructure. But at every point our examination of the non-educational (political) aspects of the bureaucracy will point to the desired educational outcomes and the failure or success of bringing these about.

Education Policy

It is important to start with a framework for educational implementation, a check list of necessary elements and steps that condition and contextualise the processes

of implementation. More recent education policy researchers, such as Stephen Ball (1994), depict curriculum reform and policy-making as a 'messy', complex and contested enterprise. As has been frequently observed (for example, Whitty, 2002), policy is an object of contest and struggle between competing ideologies, education visions, personal interests and political or organisational positions. All of these forces come together in an incubator of international, national and local contexts. For Ball, understanding education reforms requires us to interrogate policy cycles, policy discourses, policy actors, policy arenas and contexts. His is a nuanced and more realistic approach to analysing education reform developed over years through a series of empirical analyses of policy sites, discourses and contexts. Policy is produced through a series of struggles involving many actors and agencies. In addition, local policy cannot be understood without reference to the global impact of transnational agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, not for profit and for profit organisations, and so forth.

Change to an education system and its curriculum is always a change to the status quo, to what already exists. Therefore in trying to understand how national education systems and their curricula change, it is important to understand how those systems and curricula are currently structured. What this means is that the same programme of reform delivered in different countries is likely to have different effects on the different elements of the system and will have different histories within the system. It is possible to categorise reform effect and history in five ways: point of entry into the system and direction of flow, sustainability of the integrity of the reform, intensity of the reform or capacity to effect change, malleability of the system or capacity to change, and institutionalisation processes.

With regards to the first of these – point of entry and direction of flow – there are a number of possible scenarios. There are different points of entry: at the top of the system where this is understood either as the progenitor of policy or as the apex of a power structure however diffuse it is or becomes; at the bottom of the system so that the point of entry is not at the political, policy-making, bureaucratic or official level but at the level of teacher and classroom; or at a variety of entry points in the system. Broadly, three models depicting direction of flow can be identified: a centrally controlled policy process where the direction is uni-directional and downward oriented; a pluralist model where the direction of flow is still uni-directional, but the developmental movement is to all parts of the system and the orientation is pluralist; and a fragmented and multi-directional model where new policy (which represents the reform) is always in a state of flux as policy texts are received and interpreted at different points in the system and the process is understood as fragmented, non-linear, contested and as a place where original intentions are rarely fulfilled in practice. In other words, without a consistent

flow that is distributed throughout the system, there will always be an element of risk involved that the reform will result in unintended outcomes.

The second of these elements is the sustainability of the integrity of the reform over time. What we mean by this is the capacity of the reform to retain its original shape, form and content as it is disseminated through the system. A reform is embedded in what already exists. Most obviously the reform itself as it was originally conceived (in its pure and ideal state) undergoes processes of amendment, modification, correction and revision, and it does this at different points in the process. These different points can be described as: exploration and development, recontextualisation, implementation, re-implementation and institutionalisation. When we refer to the integrity of a reform, this should not be understood in any ideal or absolute sense. A reform or an intervention in a system is always an amalgam of different ideas and prescriptions that is never completely coherent. What can be suggested, however, is that in the long process of formulation of the reform to application, to implementation, and thence to institutionalisation, the original integrity of the reform is either strongly or weakly maintained.

The third feature is the intensity of the reform (or intervention) and its capacity to effect change. This refers to the structure of the reform or the way it is constituted. Some reforms are focused on relations within the system that are likely to have a minimal impact on the system as a whole; others aim to influence the whole workings of the system. Examples of the former include labour market reforms, which though they usually come within a package of other reforms, are designed to impact on one part of the system and not the whole. On the other hand, reforms, for example, which focus on the curriculum and the way it is delivered, as in the 1988 Education Reform Act in the United Kingdom, which changed the whole tenor and orientation of education in that country, can be thought of as whole system reforms or interventions. Furthermore, some of these reforms are crafted so that, even given the state of the system into which they are being introduced, they have a more fundamental impact than other reforms. This in turn points to the degree of resilience of the system or capacity to resist a reform. And, indeed, any educational system has a limited capacity to resist being reformed, not least because those elements that allow it to resist may be the objective of the reform; systems therefore have a greater or lesser capacity to resist reforms. Equally, a reform itself has a greater or lesser capacity to impact on and change the structures and environments into which it is being introduced, and in part this refers to not only how it is going to be introduced, but also to the structures and constitution of the reform package itself. Its penetrative power (though this may not be realised) or capacity to effect change is different with different reforms. This is the intensity of the reform or intervention, and clearly its obverse is the resilience or otherwise of the current arrangements within the system. This is the malleability of that system.

Beyond this, there are institutionalising elements in the system, two of which are particularly important. The first of these is the longevity and sustainability of

resource arrangements, allocations of particular people to positions of responsibility, particular roles and arrangements of power and authority, and the capacity of key people in the system, new policy discourses, new policies and new priorities. The second element is the capacity to adapt to changes to these new policy discourses, policies and priorities. An example of an institutionalised mechanism set up to allow this to happen is a formal curriculum review at a set point in time, though most educational processes of review, development and implementation round the world are conducted on an ad hoc basis; when, where and how are decided by political imperatives.

Education Reforms

Insight into problems faced by an educational system and awareness of potential solutions do not necessarily lead to the ability to act in an effective manner in order to guide stakeholders in instituting change. The rapid and successful implementation of education reforms in a school system is directly dependent on the quality of the knowledge, skills and thinking that an education system and those that introduce its planned reforms bring to the reform process. Moreover, innovations and reforms call for new and often substantially improved, knowledge, skills and thinking in several domains. This includes knowledge about obstacles to change at both the instrumental and affective levels and about the change process itself.

John Kotter (2012) suggests eight steps that characterise effective change: establishing a legitimate sense of urgency; creating a guiding coalition with enough power and knowledge to lead the change; developing a strategy and a vision; communicating the change vision; empowering broad-based action; generating short-term wins and celebrating them; consolidating gains and producing more change; and anchoring these new approaches in the work culture. Kotter warns that it is particularly in the later stages of a change process when progress is being made toward achieving goals that change is likely to fail because people are then often tired and feel enough has been accomplished. If planned changes are not sufficiently integrated with organisational routines, they tend to dissipate. Applying Kotter's eight steps is far from being a simple mechanistic process. It requires a solid knowledge about communications, planning, stakeholder inclusion, knowledge management and the development of systems, as well as commitment to the planned change. In addition, he also stresses the need for planned changes to appeal as much to the heart as the mind. Kotter further argues that in times of accelerated change, organisations need two systems that operate in concert: traditional hierarchies and flexible networks staffed with people from the whole of the organisation who are empowered to propose and lead change. What is also needed is an extensive understanding of the way the potential model of reform, for example, when it

refers to teacher training or inclusive practices or devolved governance, works as an abstract model, in practices external to the reform setting, and potentially in practices in the reform setting, such as Indian teacher training institutes, schools and colleges.

Michael Fullan (2007) in turn, proposes a different set of reform elements: maintaining a focus on moral purpose; understanding change; increasing coherence among various aspects of a planned change; relationship-building; knowledge creation and sharing; and building commitment among an organisation's internal and external members (i.e. its stakeholders). Fullan focuses on consciously being aware of shaping and using the ideational realm of aspirations, commitment and values, as well as the mechanics of how people work together, create and manage knowledge. His work suggests that particular care has to be given to ensure that various documents, be these vision statements, plans or policies, are aligned with one another so each supports the other, and core messages and directions are clear to those reading and implementing the documents. Again, in this model there is a neglect of the relevance of internal elements of the specific reform and the relations between them.

Fullan (2014) argues that Ontario was successful in reforming its education system partly because it used positive as opposed to negative pressure. Fullan defines positive pressure as being characterised by having the system maintain a focus on urgency, building partnerships and working with peers, making key data openly available and instituting non-punitive accountability, all the while seeking to create irresistible synergy. As with any model, the Ontario model may appear attractive due to its simplicity, but caution is also required. Ontario experienced numerous problems which have not been fully explored such as the negative backwash effects of examinations; moreover, whilst it clearly demonstrated the capacity of a system to adapt to policy change, there remain significant elements of under-performance which were not addressed. Even allowing the success of the Ontario approach, it does not follow that Fullan provides a clear blue-print which can be replicated elsewhere; contexts are distinctive in an ever-changing world.

However, despite what is now known about successful educational change, it is noteworthy that education systems and their institutional arrangements are stubbornly resistant to change. Two central messages about overcoming resistance to change arise out of the work of leading thinkers in change management. The first is that those leading change require high levels of meta-cognitive, meta-affective and meta-social awareness. The second is that people approach change with their personal understandings and feelings, and that these need to be explored in relationship to work in order to understand their impact on the work process. In other words, change in and of education systems almost always requires more than mechanical or technical solutions. Whatever changes are sought, usually these also need to lead to a change in beliefs, feelings, knowledge and behaviours, if a change is to be sustainable.

Normally when a government decides to reform its education system, or any other public service for that matter, it begins by examining what is on offer, and then selects what fits best in relation to its political leanings and the various constraints within which it operates. Although it is important to distinguish these approaches in order to clarify their potential to reach particular educational goals, their incarnation in real-life settings is what determines what happens in the final instance. Social participation in the United Kingdom during the 1980s had different meanings and outcomes to that experienced in Nicaragua in the same period. Sometimes policies may grow organically out of previous ones or cohere easily with others in other sectors, but elsewhere they may be superimposed on, or make a sharp break with, what previously existed, and may be assembled in an incoherent fashion, clashing with other education or economic policies.

Reform Models

Currently on offer are four basic approaches to educational reform. The first of these is a top-down model. Governments stipulate the types of judgement that should be made about the successful delivery of educational policies, and about how this should be achieved. They have the resources to impose these reforms on the system, though this is rarely achieved in practice in ways that policy-makers intended. The reason for this is that reform processes are generally multi-directional rather than uni-directional. Policy texts and directives issued by governments always allow amendments and changes to be made at every stage of the process and at every level (including the stages of implementation). This more fluid model of policy better reflects the relationship between policy development and implementation. A variant on this is an evaluative state model where the state withdraws from the precise implementation of policy though it clearly has an important role in framing that policy. It sets up a series of semi-independent bodies whose purpose is to ensure that institutions and individuals conform to government directives. These semi-independent bodies have a role in interpreting government policy and subsequently enforcing these policies by imposing sanctions on institutions and individuals if they do not conform. The reform process is carried out by quasi-government agencies at arm's length from governments. This is however, still very much a top-down reform model.

A second type is the quasi-market model. Here, governments decide to withdraw directly from the formation and implementation of policy, and set up quasi-market systems which hand power to the consumer, thus putting pressure on educational institutions by either exercising or threatening to exercise powers of voice or exit. If in the latter case too much of this takes place, then this threatens the survival of the organisation. The market is a quasi-market, not least because some groups of consumers have a greater capacity to exercise voice or exit, and

therefore have a greater degree of cultural capital and can display and use it more effectively than other people.

A third reform model is the professional development model. Here it is thought that different types of decisions within a system should be made by different people, because at the level at which they operate they are more likely to have the required expertise for making such decisions. Professional interests therefore drive this reform process.

The final model is the social participation model, and the principle underpinning this is that since there are no conclusive ways of determining the correctness of particular sets of values, decisions within education systems have to be made through negotiations between the various stakeholders. This means that no particular stakeholder has a monopoly of power over any other, or can claim a special status, but the various partners negotiate with each other and come to an agreed solution. What this also means is that the method for reaching agreement has to be in some ideal sense divested of those power relations which privilege one stakeholder over another.

In trying to understand how interventions in education systems work, in the first instance we need to remind ourselves of the principal elements of a public educational practice, namely, that it comprises the state's deployment of human resources, its strategic hold over infrastructure and other material and financial resources, its mobilisation of ceremonies, rituals, meanings and values, and its creation and maintenance of a central value system. Therefore, in trying to understand how national education systems, such as the Indian system and its curriculum, change, we need to understand how the Indian system and its curriculum are currently structured. Thus, the same programme of reform delivered in different countries is likely to have different effects on the different elements of the system and will have different histories within the system. What we have been identifying here are internal relations in a change process.

There are also exogenous or extra-national influences, although we have to be clear that these globalising pressures do not determine policy and practice within particular countries in an over-arching way. Globalisation comprises a process of policy and practice convergence between different nations, regions and jurisdictions in the world. This can occur in a number of ways. The first is through a process of policy borrowing or policy learning, where the individual country is the recipient of policies from other countries or from a collection of other countries. These processes impact in complex ways on educational practices, and not only on state-sponsored ones. The second is through the direct impact of supra-national bodies which have power and influence over member countries and which are seeking harmonisation of national educational policies and practices. The third is a more subtle approach and this is where the supra-national body does not deal in policies or practices but in a common currency of comparison, which may be epistemic (as in the means used by, for example, the OECD to

compare one education system with another) or functional (as in the distribution of resources, including discursive resources). The fourth process that potentially allows convergence is the autochthonous response of each national system of education to a common imperative from outside its jurisdiction, though in most cases this is more likely to encourage divergence rather than convergence. The fifth is a direct response to globalisation pressures by a nation, region or jurisdiction. With regards to the influence and impact of globalisation, there are four possible spatio-temporal positioners: the extension and extensive capacity of the global network, its intensity, the velocity of the global flows and the impact they are likely to have (cf. Held et al., 1999). We address these issues at a later stage in this book, where we examine these globalising imperatives and influences through such notions as policy transfer and policy learning, and in particular, in our analysis, borrow a notion of vernacular globalisation from Lingard (2000), which pays careful attention to national, regional and jurisdictional autochthonous responses to the various forms of globalisation that currently exist.

Policy Learning

This book focuses on the important notion of policy learning. We offer here some comments on this approach. Our concern then, is with policy learning, i.e. identifying a set of practices which are considered to be successful in one national setting and then transposing them to another national setting (as we have already indicated, the example we use in this book is India), in which a problem or need has been identified; and the policy which has been transposed is thought to be a solution to the problem or able to meet this need, with the transfer understood as a learning activity.

Policy borrowing in one variant (P_1) has a series of stages, as in the model developed by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008): conceptualisation (neutralising the questions to be addressed), contextualisation (providing a description of the issues against local backgrounds in two or more of the cases), isolation of differences (determining variances), explanation (developing an hypothesis), reconceptualisation (contextualising the findings) and application (generalising the findings).

This model can be usefully amended (i.e. to P_2) so that it now includes seven steps or phases. The first step is where the investigator conceptualises the focus of the investigation. She then identifies a mechanism within Country A (where this is the country from which the policy is being borrowed). A third step is understanding how this mechanism works in the context of Country A; in other words, identifying those factors within Country A which allow the mechanism to work as it was intended or at least as it has been adapted to a new set of circumstances (over time but still within Country A). A fourth step is identifying another country (B) which seems to be a suitable recipient of this mechanism, that is, it seems to

have some similarities to the donor's context. A fifth step is identifying those similarities and differences between the contexts of the two countries. A sixth step is making a judgement about the degree of similarity and difference between the two settings and subsequently making a judgement about the amount and type of change required for the mechanism to work in Country B, which also requires a judgement to be made about whether the mechanism is working or not; this involves predicting how one mechanism which seems to work in one particular socio-historical setting should work in another which is characterised by a different set of organisational arrangements. And finally, having identified the consequences of transferring the mechanism to the new country, the policy transfer is implemented.

A third model (P_3), and the one which we will be developing in this book, is a policy-learning model, and it therefore has built into it the characteristics of a learning process. An accepted, but not uncontested, view of learning is to theorise it as a process, with a range of characteristics. It has a set of pedagogic relations, that is, it incorporates a relationship between a learner and a catalyst, which could be a person, a text, an object in nature, a particular array of resources, an educational system or process, an artefact, an allocation of a role or function to a person, or a sensory object. A change process is required, either internal to the learner or external to the community of which this learner is a member. In any learning episode, there are temporal and spatial arrangements, and these can be understood in two ways: first, that learning is internally structured, and second, that learning episodes are externally located in time and space.

The first policy-borrowing model (P_1) is focused on the transformation of one set of descriptors about a policy mechanism into another so that the second set now fits the new circumstances in which the policy will be enacted. Here the contrastive assumption is that generalised knowledge can be produced through a process of identifying similarities and differences between a phenomenon and the circumstances in which it can be applied, and eliminating those factors that are not relevant to the transformative process. In the second policy-borrowing model (P_2 adapted from P_1) there is a further assumption made that those descriptors refer to real events, happenings and mechanisms, and thus the transformational process has as its product a transformation of a material reality. The third and more significant model (P_3) builds in an element of learning into the process and thus contextualises such learning both at the site of formation and at the site of implementation of the recipient country.

Productive Practices

In this book, we focus on productive practices that could and did form the centre-piece for educational reforms in our case study country, India. The development of these productive practices formed the major part of a research and development

project conducted by us and in conjunction with Save-the-Children, India, and funded by the European Union. We refer to the project's aims, activities and outputs throughout, and in particular in the concluding chapter we attempt to show why the envisaged purposes of the reform processes in the end were frustrated. In the first place, we identified jurisdictions (for example, Finland, England and Australia) that were thought likely to be *productive locations for learning* in relation to teacher cadre management systems, including teacher selection, recruitment and preparation. We also examined issues relating to school autonomy, school management and decentralisation, and identified jurisdictions that had a reputation for innovative practices in this area. The third productive practice we identified was removing barriers to inclusive education. This reform concentrated on India's efforts to improve educational and social outcomes for all their students. Particular attention was paid to inclusive education reform initiatives that allow the inclusion of vulnerable students such as indigenous students, and policies and programmes that dealt with a range of issues of student displacement through poverty, family migration, the education of refugee children and the girl child. Also foregrounded were recent approaches to the education of children with disabilities.

These three areas are the three productive practices in the book, reflecting our concern that the focus needs to be on how practitioners and policy-makers learn from the work and experience of each other, rather than on the apparently exemplary practice itself. Therefore, we do not see learning from international comparative experience as a passive process of policy borrowing. Because we saw the jurisdictions from which the three productive practices emerged as productive locations for learning, the effectiveness of the transfer depended to some extent not on the practices adopted in the countries studied, but on the quality of the learning derived from them and the way that learning played out in practice in the new environment. This is a process which needs to be actively managed with close attention to contextual specificities, cultural divergences and the dilemmas of globalising education policy. The focus here is on generative practices rather than on generalising educational practices across very different contexts.

We identify key initiatives within the three themed areas and have produced a detailed narrative about each of these three productive practices (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). This allowed us to demonstrate the thinking behind the productive practice, its context and impacts, and further allowed us to understand not only the quality and properties of the chosen initiatives, but also the processes through which they could be successfully implemented. This represents the essence of policy learning. In the next chapter we examine the site of implementation for our three productive practices, India and its education system.