EDITORIAL
REFORMS IN EDUCATION

Sunil Behari Mohanty

Priority on an educational reform varies from one nation to another, depending on its own necessities, at a particular time. For instance, inclusion of population education in school curriculum may be a priority for developing countries which have high birth rate, whereas it is a least area of concern for developed countries which face loss in total population in every successive census. Nations and their individuals and institutions undertake efforts to improve the quality of education. Initiatives taking place in one nation also brings in innovations in other nations, in one form or another. For instance, micro-teaching, as part of initial teacher training activities in USA, started with real school students, whereas in India, it was carried out in simulated situation. New initiatives for educational reform generally take place on the assumption that something is wrong with the existing practices and new ones may improve the situation. Individual experts sometimes borrow ideas or initiatives found in other nations. Desmond, Grieshop and Subramaniam (2004, pp. 34-35) reported about garden-based learning introduced in early nineteenth century in European countries., which in early twentieth century was introduced in USA and after second world war the stress on garden based education gradually got replaced by converting space for garden to play ground and for other purposes. School garden movement in USA might have given ideas to Mahatma Gandhi to go for craft centered curriculum, which was also after initial push during independence movement got side tracked by post independence efforts in India to make the nation technologically advanced. Certain countries allow automatic promotion to a student every year during compulsory period of schooling. "In almost all countries, according to the legislation in force, it is possible for a pupil to repeat a class in primary education (Eurydice 2011a, p.21).

Hence grade repetition as a reform varies from one country to another.

Reforms also comeup due to recommendations of various commissions and committees set up by national governments. In India, Report of the Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar 1953) suggested introduction of craft as a subject from school stage. It also suggested multipurpose secondary school. The Report of the education Commission (Kothari 1966) suggested work experience, in place of craft education. In late seventies, two committees (Patel 1977 and Adisesihiah 1978) came up with the subject 'Socially Productive Work" in place of 'Work Experience'. It is not that only Indian educationists have borrowed ideas from west. West has also borrowed ideas from India. During British rule, Andrew Bell, a Christian Missionary being impressed by monitorial system in vogue in the then schools in Madras province, applied the practice in schools, in the then poor Scotland. Madars College of St. Andrews stands today as testimony of that initiative. Wikipedia on St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland, UK stated that "Madras College is the only secondary school in the town. The school which opened to pupils in 1832 was based on a Madras system - founded and endowed by the missionary, Andrew Bell (1755–1832), a native of the town". All high performance nations, in order to improve their efficiency, attempt to provide best education possible with whatever resources available at their disposal. Half a century ago, when USSR became pioneer in sending sputnik to space, USA started revamping its school science curricula in the pattern of the then USSR school curricula that provided science practical in classroom for school students of age 11 onwards. Lesson study activity for teacher development initiated in Japan has now found place in certain States of USA. In India too, on the basis of the recommendation of the UNESCO Planning Mission of 1964, attempt was made to adopt the then USSR school science curriculum. The Report of the Education Commission 1964-66 (Kothari 1966) endorsed it. NCERT initially introduced

this as a project in one English medium and thirty Hindi medium schools. Selected teacher training institutions were supplied science apparatus for the purpose. Science textbooks and science kits to perform science experiments starting from class VI were developed. Certain States even introduced this new curriculum in their regular schools. After a few years, the policy changed and NCERT prepared school text books including science kits had to be abandoned. USA experts too imparted training to science teachers in India, in the light of the new school science curriculum in their own country. USA was rich enough to bear the huge extravaganza in changing school science curricula. The change over to the then USSR pattern and going back in case of teaching of science from the upper (higher) primary stage was a huge loss of funds in case of India, a struggling developing country at that time. Curricular reform is an ngoing phenomenon in all developed countries. For instance in UK, Bassett, Haldenby, Tanner, & Trewhitt (2010, p. 6) suggested various educational reforms which include ending the effort of the government to control teacher quality and universities, in conjunction with business and excellent school leaders to develop education-focused MBA-style qualifications to replace the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). These reforms may not be relevant in another country. Since 2012, England region of UK has Academies, which are publicly-funded schools free from local authority control, with no obligation to follow the National Curriculum and the ability to set term times independently from the local authority. Finch, Haldenby, Thorpe, Watkin, & Zuccollo, J. (2014, p.7) reported that at the end of January 2014, there were 3,613 open academies in England - 49 per cent of all primary schools and 53 per cent of all secondary schools.

Teachers play vital role in implementing any reform. "The chances for success in reform improve through effective consultation, willingness to compromise and, above all, through the involvement of teachers in the planning and implementation of reform (OECD

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2011, p. 52). Guven (2008, p.8) while writing on Turkish teacher education reform pointed out suffering of developing countries because of imposition by developed countries. The UNESCO has been suggesting strategies for improving quality of initial teacher training, whereas the nations like USA and UK have been allowing persons without any formal teacher training qualifications to work in the schools as regular school teachers.

OECD (2011, p. 12) mentions about efforts in OECD countries to improve quality of teacher training.

> "Offering more flexible approaches to teacher education that provide opportunities for part-time study and distance learning, and that give credits for relevant qualifications and experience. Such alternative pathways into teaching can be particularly appealing to under-represented groups, such as males and those from minority backgrounds".

A few strategies for continued professional development (CPD) of teachers found in case of high performing nations are: Well-structured and -resourced induction programmes for beginning teachers that may include, one or two years of heavily supervised teaching, with a reduced workload, mentoring by master teachers, and continued formal instruction, using in CPD programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to those they will use with their students, and encouraging the development of teachers' learning communities and help teachers to take time to learn deeply, and employ inquiry- and group-based approaches (OECD 2011, p.19).High performing systems encourage collective teaching, collaborative learning and sharing of experiences among teachers and other members of the community involved in learning of the students. The network of UNESCO Associated Schools Project (ASP) is an initiative to internationalise education. Centre for International Education & Research (CIER) (2003) stated that "ASPnet provided added value with gains in innovatory teaching methods, the climate of the school, intercultural understanding and language learning opportunities." "Co-operative learning offers anopportunity for students to get feedback from

their peers about correct as well as incorrect responses, which promotes both engagement and learning. These co-operative/ competitive settings are also valuable for helping slower students in a class by providing extra instruction for them in this setting."(Rosenshine 2010, p.25). Collaboration with teachers' unions has resulted in speedy educational reform in countries. Certain nations provide increased time for interaction with Parents and Continued Professional Development. Finland is way ahead in providing opportunities for teachers for their continued professional and development and increased time for teacher parent interaction.

Cohen-Vogel & Smith (2007) referred to the practice of having alternatively certified teachers in USA. OECD 2011, P.9 mentioned a few interesting approaches towards recruitment pursued by some countries:

- Promotional programmes targeted at groups who are "non-traditional" entrants to teaching.

- Broadening selection criteria for new teachers, with the aim of identifying applicants with the greatest potential, including interviews, preparing lesson plans, and demonstrating teaching skills.

- Changing the role of seniority in determining teacher assignments, to avoid situations where new teachers are assigned to the more difficult and unpopular schools, further disadvantaging students there as well as potentially damaging teachers' career development.

- For desirable teaching jobs, sometimes qualities that are harder to measure, such as enthusiasm, commitment and sensitivity to students' needs, are given greater weight in applications, where these are seen to be more directly related to the quality of teaching and learning than the traditional emphases on qualifications and years of experience.

UK, Dept. for Education (2012) stated that

"Independent schools and free schools can already hire brilliant people who have not got qualified teacher status

(QTS). We are extending this flexibility to all academies so more schools can hire great linguists, computer scientists, engineers and other specialists who have not worked in state schools before."

In India too, at the elementary school stage, in difficult areas having sparse population, new schools are managed with persons without initial teacher training qualifications. However, such teachers get lower salary than their counterparts.

In recent times, high performing nations give more stress on improvement in teacher quality, as teachers are the initiators of lifelong learning skills in the young learners. They go for a teacher performance management system that recognises excellence. For instance, "Finland has made teaching a sought-after occupation by raising entry standards and giving teachers a high degree of responsibility, including as "action researchers" to find effective educational solutions"(OECD 2011, p.11). The nations are trying to have teachers from a wider range of backgrounds and experiences. A few examples are:

"•   Opening the teaching profession to individuals with relevant experience outside education, not just in vocational programs (whose teachers are required to have industrial experience in some countries).

•   Recognizing the skills and experience gained outside education and reflecting those in starting salaries.

•   Enabling appropriately qualified entrants, including mature student teacher trainees, to start working and earning a salary before acquiring teacher education qualifications." (OECD 2011, p.12).

"Last but not least, research shows that people who have close contact with schools – such as parents who assist in classrooms, or employers who have students in workplace learning programs – often have much more positive attitudes towards teachers than people with little direct contact. This suggests that building stronger

links between the schools and the community can help to enhance the status of teaching. Teachers and school leaders can play a key role in strengthening connections with families and communities as part of effective learning. T his can involve eliciting greater support from stakeholders with traditional expectations about teaching by communicating current knowledge about what makes learning effective. Personalized relationships with learners and their families can be part of this process, as can after-school and extra-curricular programs, support for families as learning environments, and making more explicit the links between formal learning and life after schooling" (OECD 2011, P. 10).

Eurydice (2010, p.33) exploring the issue of' 'New Skills for New Jobs' in 24 European countries stated that
> "Virtually all European countries are improving their capacity to forecast and anticipate skills needs". Since 2008, there have been "new initiatives related to the development of methods, approaches and tools for the early identification of skills needs. In addition to various ad hoc forecasting projects, many countries are trying to put in place a holistic system of skills forecasting that will bridge different forecasting studies and surveys and will use their results in a coordinated way."

A few recent reforms in school education in India are as follows:
Making provision for school teacher selection tests for persons, even after they have qualifying degrees, to take care of dilution in standards of degrees.
Improving continued professional development of elementary school teachers through Block and Cluster Resource Centres.
Improving the quality of school teaching by providing funds for school teachers to prepare audio-visual aids.
Allocating more funds for universalisation of elementary education
Increasing quality of schooling of students from disadvantaged groups by having special residential schools;

Providing more opportunity for talented students by providing Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas

Improving learning climate by providing funds to schools to improve standard of their physical resources.

In India, pre-school education was not a priority before 86th amendment of the constitution (12 December 2002) that made elementary education part of fundamental right and mentioned pre-school education for children below the age of six years in the Article 45 of the Directive Principle of the State Policy in the Constitution. Hence, the necessity to universalise early childhood education and to convert all Anganwadis to early childhood centres.

The educational scenario indicates fast rate increase in the gap for learning opportunity found between citizens of developed and developing countries. "Much of current scientific inquiry at many institutions in developing countries is under-funded" (Mouton & Waast 2009, p.168). In case of research and development in education, developing nations will lag behind and the gap between rich and poor nations shall continue to grow wider. Various factors influence educational reform. UNESCO (2003, p. 2) lists six developments having important implications for higher education in terms of quality, access, diversity and funding, which are: "i) the emergence of new education providers such as multi-national companies, corporate universities, and media companies; ii) new forms of delivering education including distance, virtual and new face-to-face, such as private companies; iii) greater diversification of qualifications and certificates; iv) increasing mobility of students, programmes, providers and projects across national borders; v) more emphasis on lifelong learning which in turn increases the demand for post-secondary education; and vi) the increasing amount of private investment in the provision of higher education. There are also other factors.

EURYDICE (2011a, p.53) mentions about efforts in some European countries. In Norway, a specific tool (the Individual

Education Plan) has been introduced to support the personalisation of higher education studies. Since 2003, all students who register in a higher education programme have had to fill in an 'Individual Education Plan' which asks them to indicate whether they plan to study full- or part-time, and how many ECTS credits they intend to take each semester/year. The plan is used as a tool to follow up on student progress. In case of UK, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has recently funded eight higher education institutions to pilot flexible learning pathways, aiming to attract students from non-traditional and under-represented backgrounds by using flexible methods of delivery such as: accelerated programmes, work based programmes, accelerated part-time programmes and programmes delivered by distance, e-learning or 'blended' learning (involving some distance learning and some learning on campus) and in the academic year 2008/09, these programmes had approximately 850 students. There has been also growth in alternative modes of study in higher education. There has been much rise in the number of students enrolled in distance education courses, evening and weekend courses at higher education institutions, enrolled in traditional full-time programmes, with permission to attend part-time or to who actually spend only part of their time on study related activities.(EURYDICE 2011a, p.53).

Eurydice (2011b, p. 48) stated that in European countries, higher education institutions grant access to bachelor's programmes on the basis of a candidate's overall knowledge and skills which are assessed by the board of the institution. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, prior non-formal and informal learning can also be taken into account for access to doctoral programmes for those who do not hold a master's degree. Since 2009, in Germany, Master craftsmen, technicians and those with vocational qualifications in a commercial or financial area are eligible to enter higher education if they have at least three years' experience in their professional field. In Spain, the universities reserve a certain number of places

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to be allocated to higher education candidates who fit into specific categories. These categories include three groups of mature students: students older than 25, 40 and 45 years. Candidates aged over 25 who comply with traditional entry requirements may be admitted to higher education programmes on successful completion of a special university entrance examination (Spain).

Some of the provisions made in European countries mentioned in EURYDICE (2011a, p.56) were as follows:

> **"**In Finland students in universities are generally free to choose between a range of study options to make up their degree and to decide their own pace of study. However, it must be noted that slightly less freedom is available in polytechnics and in programmes related to some regulated professions).

In ancient times, there was international mobility of student population. With growth in transport and communication facilities, the rate of mobility has been increasing every day. As per UIS (2009) India was one of the top five destinations in case of Arab countries of Baharain, Dijbouti,Oman, Qatar, and UAE, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nepal and Kenya. Whereas top five destinations for Indian students were: U.S.A. (1, 01,563), U.K. (34,065), Australia (26,573), New Zealand (5,710), and Russian Fed. (4,314). Failures of the national governments to provide high quality institutions have made rich citizens send their children to foreign and developed countries. Recognition of the necessity for more advanced skills and knowledge, has made developed countries go for heavy investment in secondary and tertiary education, whereas, the developing countries and their international partners have not been able to do so (Bloom 2006, pp. 107-108). Privatisation of education for profit has been a recent trend. Private education sector in developing countries is large at all levels - primary, secondary and tertiary and is expanding rapidly, and giving remarkable examples of

innovation (Tooley 1999, p. 11). (ILO 2010, p.28) describing international scenario stated that

> "To meet increasing demand for higher education a second type of private provider is expanding rapidly and becoming increasingly important in countries previously dominated by the public sector. These are often for profit institutions, including those engaged in distance learning, although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish these providers from private nonprofit institutions. Western Europe remains largely untouched by the expansion of the private sector, although some signs of a growing private sector are seen also there."

There is speedy growth in privatisation mainly due to rise of for-profit education. Indian private universities have been sending their emissaries to enroll foreign students, especially from Africa. These universities also give their advertisements in TV channels.

Expanding access to education for educationally backward groups and increasing success rates of students from disadvantaged groups by having special coaching centres.
Giving autonomy to educational institutions, affiliated to universities.
Decentralising quality assurance functions by creating statutory bodies like AICTE, NCTE, etc.
Promoting institutional efforts for self – improvement by making institutions go for accreditation and grading.
Expanding network for continued professional training for college and university teachers
Improving access to higher and technical education by allowing speedy privatisation and improving provision for open learning programmes;
Ensuring availability of a Central University   to cover each large State

Global education reform movement has given rise to aspects such as standardisation, pre-determined curriculum, market-oriented

policies, test-based accountability, administrative leadership, etc. Out of various reforms learning community concept is an important one.

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