

Building the Edifice of Indian Education - Fortifying the Public Education System

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Abstract: - The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, enacted through the 86th amendment, declared primary education as a constitutional and fundamental right of all children in India between the ages of 6-14. The Act had stated that the remodeling of the system, should be implemented in its entirety at the earliest, but the ground reality belies the statutory vision. The Government and the Teaching community have to come to terms with a burgeoning child population looking for affordable quality education and it would be unwise to sacrifice quality and seek comfort in numbers which declares with aplomb that some states have actually wiped out illiteracy and achieved 100% literacy. The paper attempts to focus on the skewed priorities and perception of the policy makers that impact the next generation citizens. It also attempts to analyze the various issues and challenges that confront the student and the teaching community and put forth solutions to mitigate the crisis, through taking colossal humanistic and digital strides in the right direction to make children have access to quality education that would be welded to enhanced and effective learning outcomes

Index Terms— Access to Education, Literacy, Learning Outcomes, RTE, Quality of learning .

INTRODUCTION

Transition in society begins from the recognition that school is the basic unit of change and education is the dominating force to drive changes in the thinking, attitudes, opinions and perceptions of the new generation . To strengthen the Indian Education System, an educational policy was adopted by the Indian Parliament in 1968. Education was made an important and integral part of the national development efforts. After independence there has been an effort to spread education to all levels of Indian society.

Further to plug the loopholes in the system, the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words ‘free and compulsory’. ‘Free education’ means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and

completing elementary education. ‘Compulsory education’ casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group. With this, India moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Central and State Governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the impact of RTE on the Indian public education system.
2. To find out the level of learning, post RTE among primary level students mainly in rural India and also discusses initiatives to fortify the public education system .

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on secondary data availed from government and organizational research sources as information and content has been retrieved through research from the internet via journals , reports and expert opinions centered on improving the quality of learning.

SCOPE OF RTE

The RTE Act provides for the:

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighborhood

school.

- It clarifies that ‘compulsory education’ means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.

- It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.

- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.

- It lays down the norms and standards relating inter alia to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours.

- It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.

- It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.

- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition,

- It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child’s knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centered learning.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF RTE

2020 would be a historic year as the first cohort to benefit from the Right to Education Act, which came into effect in April 2010 would be completing their matriculation.

It is seen that 70% of children in rural areas still attending government schools and as the government continuous to remain committed to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, the understanding of the quality of learning outcomes becomes exceedingly important.

Some of the positive achievements in the Primary Education Sector are as follows:

- Primary education covers students from class 1 to class 8 in the age group of 6 to 14 years.

- The number of primary and middle schools has considerably increased.

- As many as 89 per cent children in the age-group of 6-14 years have been enrolled in schools. However Universalisation of primary education is still a distant dream as RTE has not percolated to almost 30.41 percentages of schools across India.

Table 1: State/UT-wise Percentage of Elementary Schools Not Complying with Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 (in reply to Unstarred Question on 26 July 2018) (From : Ministry of Human Resource Development)

State/UTs	Number of Schools Not complying with RTE	Percentage of schools Not complying with RTE
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	0.29
Andhra Pradesh	9563	21.93
Arunachal Pradesh	1307	39.34
Assam	15935	31.96
Bihar	56118	78.41
Chandigarh	11	9.48
Chhattisgarh	8350	18.96
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23	8.36
Daman & Diu	12	12.77
Delhi	812	29.11
Goa	296	34.22
Gujarat	5495	16.25
Haryana	3078	21.77
Himachal Pradesh	1778	11.48
Jammu & Kashmir	2331	9.99
Jharkhand	21729	55.41
Karnataka	10246	23.29
Kerala	473	9.75
Lakshadweep	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	39994	36.49
Maharashtra	7954	11.9

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Manipur	424	12.84
Meghalaya	1069	13.73
Mizoram	189	8.35
Nagaland	44	2.11
Odisha	10287	17.81
Puducherry	5	1.21
Punjab	2957	14.41
Rajasthan	20913	30.85

Sikkim	6	0.69
Tamil Nadu	4213	11
Telangana	6880	25.22
Tripura	71	1.64
Uttar Pradesh	65071	40.34
Uttarakhand	2952	17.31
West Bengal	22386	27.05
India	322973	30.41

Table 2: Literacy Rates (percentage) of Persons in Different Age groups

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	PERSON	GENDER GAP
2014(NSS 71 st round)				
Age 5 & above	83.6	68.1	76.0	15.5
Age 7 & above	83.2	67.1	75.4	16.1
Age 15 & above	79.8	60.8	70.5	19.0
All ages	75.7	62.0	69.1	13.7

Table 3: Year -wise Gender Parity Index (GPI) for all Categories of Students

Level /Year	Primary (I-V)	Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	Elementary (I-VIII)	Secondary (IX-X)	Higher Secondary (X-XII)
2010-11	1.01	0.95	0.99	0.88	0.86
2011-12	1.01	0.99	1.00	0.93	0.92
2012-13	1.02	1.05	1.03	0.96	0.94
2013-14	1.03	1.08	1.04	1.00	0.98
2014-15	1.03	1.09	1.05	1.01	0.99
2015-16	1.03	1.10	1.05	1.02	1.01

UNIVERSALIZATION OF EDUCATION

The overarching effect of the RTE legislation as the inequalities between the states has also reduced is definitely palpable, The highlight of the RTE is that it is implemented by almost 70 percentage of Government Schools, and it is all the more important as almost the same percentage of rural students attend government schools which is why the , there should BE a continuance of focus on RTE as a tool that guarantees basic access to education in the country, thus creating an even playing field eliminating the issues associated with location, poverty, caste, religion and gender.

MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS – MASKING FACTS

Access to primary or elementary classes I-VIII is almost universal and the number of dropouts is below 4%, but a quality deficit, that too for more than a decade, raises questions about the priorities of governments at the central and state levels. Despite the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act since April 2010 ,making eight years of education compulsory for children and the schemes floated

by the Government of India such as “Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat”, apart from efforts of the various states, India has a poor learning outcome, The World Bank has stated that said Indians are likely to be only 44% productive as workers, which is way behind their other Asian peers..

The ASER report stated that in elementary school starting from Classes I to Class VIII, children are not learning enough Only 50.3% of the students surveyed in Class V could read material prepared for students of Class II . The deficit in outcomes runs across government and private schools there was not much of a significant change in the quality of study in government schools and their counterparts in private schools as it was noted that 40% of Class VIII students in government run schools could do simple division, and the figure in private schools. was 54.2% .A silver lining is that there has been a consistent positive change in some sates as it was seen that the reading ability among Class V students in the state of Kerala jumped by 10 percentage in 2018 from that of 2016. Himachal Pradesh too ,witnessed a growth of nearly 8 percentage points and in Odisha and Chhattisgarh it was around 7 percentage points between the years of 2016 and 2018.30.9% students (6-14 age group) were in private schools in 2018, the figure was 30.6% in 2016 and 30.8% in 2014. This is less than a percentage point growth since 2014.

Table 4 :ASER 2018 %of all children Std IIIrural who:

Reading Level	Cannot recognize Letters yet	Can recognize letters but cannot read words	Can read words but cannot read sentences	Can read text at Std level but not higher	Can Read Std II Level text	Total
Std III	12.1	22.6	20.8	17.3	27.2	100
Arithmetic Level	Cannot recognize numbers till 9 yet	Can recognize numbers till 9 but not higher	Can recognize numbers till 99 but cannot subtract	Can do 2-digit by 2-digit subtraction but not division	Can do 3-digit by 1-digit division or higher	Total
Std III	7.6	26.9	37.5	19.6	8.5	100

Table5:Children in Government Schools in Std V who can read Std I Lev el text, 2008-2018

	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
India	53.1	50.7	41.7	42.2	41.7	44.2
Group 1						
Kerala	73.3	74.0	59.9	61.3	63.3	73.1
Maharashtra	74.3	71.0	55.3	51.7	63.1	66.0
Punjab	61.3	68.7	69.5	60.9	64.0	68.7
Uttarakhand	64.6	63.7	52.2	52.0	55.9	58.0
Haryana	61.1	60.7	43.5	53.9	54.6	58.1
Chhattisgarh	74.1	61.0	44.0	47.1	51.0	57.1
Assam	40.9	42.6	33.3	30.6	32.2	33.5
Madhya Pradesh	86.8	55.2	27.5	27.5	31.4	34.4
Group 2						
Karnataka	42.9	42.9	47.2	45.7	41.9	47.6
Himachal Pradesh	73.6	75.7	71.2	71.5	65.3	74.5
Odisha	59.6	45.5	46.1	49.1	48.8	56.2
Uttar Pradesh	33.4	36.0	25.6	26.8	24.3	36.2
Group 3						
Jharkhand	51.9	48.4	32.5	29.1	31.4	29.4
West Bengal	45.2	54.2	48.7	51.8	50.2	50.5
Gujarat	43.8	43.5	46.3	44.6	52.3	52.0
Rajasthan	45.1	44.2	33.3	34.4	42.5	39.1
Tamil Nadu	26.7	30.9	30.2	49.9	49.4	46.3
Bihar	62.8	57.9	43.1	44.6	38.0	35.1

THE RESURRECTION OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS –THE WAY AHEAD FOR GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The demographic dividend for India depends on the learning level of students. The quality of education has a direct and constant bearing on the economy of any country. It is true that 240 million students or nearly 20% of the population of India is in school, but their quality of learning or rather the lack of it alarmingly assumes significance as it impacts the competitiveness of the country. Further, it has an impact on the quality of everyday life, efficiency at the workplace and productivity of labour..Almost 70 percent of children in the rural area still attend and it should be a natural offshoot of it that government schools have to commit themselves to improving learning outcomes. The observed decline in learning outcomes may be due to a plethora of reasons but one plausible explanation might be connected to the direct repercussion of bringing never enrolled or drop out students back into the mainstream of education.

Multiple pronged interventions may have to be carried out to meet the challenges and needs of low-income that would focused on parents of very young children (especially 0-6 years of age). Best parenting practices and capacity building of educators will have to be the focus area. However, such initiatives for skill building requires a vision and calls for patience and longer term policies.

Digitalize Classrooms and administration would speed up infrastructure provision and would free up time of students and teacher to focus on learning and teaching.

Unfortunately, teachers in India, especially those in the government school system, are largely seen as a governance problem, with the focus on getting them into the classroom rather than developing their skills and motivation. A National Council of Educational Research and Training study finds there is no systematic incorporation of teacher feedback into designing trainings, and little variation or consideration of local issues. The outcome of such training is limited and there is no measure of whether this is translated into classroom practice.

The World Development Report On Education (2018)remarks that that the skills of the teacher along with their intrinsic motivation is the key to better learning outcomes. Governments will also have to bring about a quantum jump in investment on education, and probably allocate 6% of GDP instead of the meager present 2.7%.

Indigenous reforms, specific to different states and that requires tailored solutions, which will not work without deep reforms of governance. The problem has now been diagnosed and public advocacy has received a rapid momentum, the governments in synchronization with civil society needs to harness the political willingness to invest in monetary terms and capacity building so as improve the quality of education, and implement an ongoing teachers' education program paving the way for learning to be the central focus of the schools as it is the foremost responsibility of any school to impart qualitative learning skills to the students who have entrusted their future to the institution

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