



RIGHT TO EDUCATION-CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The Right to Education Act, which came into force on 1st April, 2010 after 62 years of independence, has made free & compulsory education a fundamental right of every child in the 6 to 14 age group. Now India has joined the group of those countries who provide for a constitutional guarantee to free & compulsory education. The enforcement of this Right has made it a joint responsibility of central & state Governments to provide free & compulsory education to all children by all means. The present paper begins with a historical perspective, outlines salient features of the Act, throws light on the challenges ahead and suggests ways to overcome them.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the time of Independence, India inherited an education system which was not quantitatively small but was also characterized by striking gender & regional disparities. Only one child out of three had been enrolled in primary school. Thus challenge was to provide elementary education to all its children within stipulated time. Accordingly, universal education for all children in the 6-14 age group became a constitutional provision by Article 45 of the Constitution. Special care of the economic and educational interests of the under privileged sections of the population also became a constitutional obligation. But these constitutional provisions still remain unfulfilled. Government's commitment to ensure elementary education for all children aged 6-14 years was later seen in its ambitious programme named 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan'.

Free and compulsory elementary education was made a fundamental --right under Article 21 A of the Constitution in December 2002 by the 86th Amendment. In bringing this into action, the "Right Of Children to free and compulsory education Bill" was drafted in 2005. This was revised and became act in August 2009, but was enforced on 1st April 2010.

The Right to Education Act will benefit about one corer out –of –school children and a large number of drop-out children. As per an estimate, out of 22 corer children in the 6-14 years age group in the country,4.6 percent children have no enrolment in any school.

The Salient Features Of the Act

The Right to Education Act is a detailed & comprehensive piece of legislation which includes provisions related to schools,teachers,curriculum ,evaluation,access and specific divisions of duties and responsibilities of all concerned. Main features of the act are as follows:

1. Every child from 6-14 years of age shall have the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school toll completion of elementary education.
2. Private schools shall provide 25 percentage reservation for weaker sections and economically disadvantaged schools are required to meet all specified norms and standards within three years to avoid cancellation of their recognition.
3. The Act calls for a fixed pupil-teacher ratio, i.e.30:1.
4. The Act mandates improvement in quality of education.
5. Financial burden will be shared between Central and State Governments.

Challenges Ached

1. State Governments' Apathy:

Lack of Promptness /Commitment poor economic condition of the states. The central government may request the Finance Commission to consider additional resources to a state.

2. Avalability of Infrastructure Facilities:

Establishment of Primary Schools within one Kilometer and Upper Primary Schools within 3 kilometer distance. Well equipped classrooms, library.laboratory.Play ground, drinking water and toilet facilities.

3. Availability of Teachers and Required Pupil-Ratio:

- Five lacks new teachers are to be recruited and 5 lacks new classrooms are to be constructed to meet the required 30:1 pupil teacher ratio
- There are seven lacks teachers in the recognized 13 lacks primary schools. Out of these .3 lacks teachers are either untrained or under-training.

- In many states large number of teachers are Para-teachers and many of them are untrained.

4. Quality of Education:

Quality of education depends upon the quality of teachers. Teachers' accountability to the pupils, their parents, the community and to their own profession needs to be determined.

5. Twenty Five percent Reservation of Seats in Private Schools:

- What will be the identification, selection and verification of economically weaker and disadvantaged children?
- How the whole procedure will be monitor by Government?

RECOMMENDATIONS/ SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the Challenges discussed earlier following are some suggestions which may be helpful to meet the challenges:

1. The state governments are required to show promptness for the implementations of the RTE Act. Once the new Central RTE Act comes into force, all other Acts are superceded. The state would be able to issues guidelines and state Rules, but not separate Acts.
2. Primary schools with all minimum required infrastructure facilities should be established in the neglected areas on primary basis. Central government should release budget of its share to the states at the earliest.
3. To meet the increasing demand of teachers, the skilled teachers must be recruited at the earliest. To train more than one million new and to reinforce the skill of in-service teachers to ensure child-friendly education.
4. Primary schools need to be made aware of the provisions made for 25 percent reservation of seats for the economically and socially disadvantaged children. Such children should be child laborers, migrant children, children with special needs.
5. There is need to streamline educational administration. The pace of implementation of the act can become faster if bottlenecks in administration are removed.
6. Families and Communities also have to play a large role to play to ensure child-friendly education for each and every one of the next five years and to reinforce the skills of in-service teachers.



7. Teachers' performance is the most crucial input in the field of education. Well qualified and highly motivated teachers are the key to effective implementation of the curriculum. Top priority, therefore, should be fixed for the improvement in the quality of teacher education program me.

8. Central and State Government shall share financial responsibility for RTE. The Central Government shall prepare estimates of expenditures.

9. To achieve the goals of Free and Compulsory Elementary Education, it is of upmost curricula that is responsive to changing needs and facilities the incorporation and integration of new content areas related to Science, Technology, Population and the Environment.

10. There will be a funding gap which needs to be supported by parents from civil society, development agencies, corporate organizations and citizens of the country.

CONCLUSION

In order to meet the challenges and surmount the hurdles that stand in the way of implementing Right to Education Act, it is needful to concentrate all efforts with full dedication and commitment. Not only the central and state governments but the nation as a whole should take responsibility in this regard. To overcome population pressures and budgetary constraints, cost effectiveness and accountability must be ascertained at every level. Substantial efforts are essential to eliminate disparities and ensure quality. Efforts should be focused on qualitative improvement of the whole program me.

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