



IMPACT OF RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT ON ENROLLMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT :

Education has often been stated to be an excellent tool for economic as well as social advancement. The creation of knowledge society can itself be contextualized in the increased importance given to investing in knowledge in the global economic order. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (35 of 2009) frequently referred to as Right to Education (RTE) is an important chapter in the annals of Children's education in the contemporary India. This paper tries to explore the status of RTE Act implementation in Davanagere district, Karnataka state.



How much the enrollment in these elementary schools after RTE implementation. From the findings it is concluded that the burden of expanding school education has mostly fallen on the government and a majority of the schools have witnessed a decline intake of students with the last two years.

KEYWORDS : Right to Education Act (RTE Act), Enrollment, elementary schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, it has constantly been stated that the 21st Century will create a knowledge society. The creation of knowledge society will probably be unique in the history of the human race since it will be the first time that humanity will create wealth on the basis of intangible ideas. In the past most of the wealth created was on the basis of brick and mortar establishment which in turn required some form of educational advances. An accepted conventional wisdom is that there is a doubling of global scientific output nearly every nine years. Knowledge society requires as its basis the creation of wealth which is in turn underscored by advances in liberal and scientific education across large sections of the populace. It is for this reason that over the past few decades countries like India are increasing their investments in education. Unlike in the past where plant, machinery and manufacturing units were the symbols of wealth, in recent years the perception of wealth has changed with the onset of new industries. The 'industries of the future include those related to different aspects of technology'¹, those which can be 'financialised' and those that make up 'intangible capitalism'². OECD opines that they "enjoy a comparative advantage because the education levels of their population was higher, but this advantage is vanishing as tertiary education expands in many developing and emerging economies.

¹ Alec Ross (2016), *The Industries of the Future*, Simon & Schuster, London.

²Jonathan Haskel and Stian Westlake (2017), *Capitalism without Capital: The Rise of the Intangible Economy*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey,

Countries are increasingly competing not only through the education level of their population but also through the quality of skills, their effective use and efficient allocation of skills to industries”, especially if they have to participate in the increasingly global value chains³. Thus, any growth in employment in the era of rapid technology induced economic change requires individuals to constantly acquire new skills. Inability to do so will mean that citizens will stare at the “spectre of uselessness”⁴ due to redundancy of skills.

The purpose is to evaluate how well the act is implemented and challenges facing in the implementation. How far we have achieved various goals of an intervention is a matter of investigation at regular intervals, with a view to keep and monitoring of the interventions, progress of educational in a various facets needs, quantification and the resulting statistics be updated periodically to evaluate the current situation and to plan corrective measures, if any needed. Each state differs in implementation of polices and programmes. RTE Act was implemented in Karnataka as “The Karnataka Right of Children to free and compulsory education rules, 28th April, 2012.

2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is unique and important for various regions. Historically, education has received a pride of place in India since at least Independence. Before independence, the colonial authorities have since Macaulay that English education should be encouraged as part of their ideological push to inculcate aspects related to “White Man’s Burden”. Post independence, successive governments have invested large amounts of money into all segments of the education value chain – primary, secondary and higher education. As per the Government of India statistics, there are a total 15,22,346 schools of all types including 840,546 primary schools, 429624 upper primary schools, 139539 secondary schools and 1112637 schools with the total expenditure on elementary and secondary education is nearly 3% of Gross Domestic Product⁵.

The constitution provides for a number of important provisions that require declare education (free and compulsory) of the child. It was first declared by the 86th Amendment of the Constitution when it was inserted into Article 21-A of the constitution. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has a number of important provisions which require greater attention to contextualize this research. In our final report we have contextualized and defined most of the terms used in our study.

The RTE requires “Compulsive Education” to every child of the age six to fourteen years. The Act provides an elaborate framework and elaborates various responsibilities on the part of different government authorities from the Central government to the local authorities, school teachers and parents (section 8). These include those which require compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education of the children in the above mentioned age group. The importance of the RTE Act is that it makes schools accessible with Section 9 states that it is the duty of the local authority to “ensure availability of a neighborhood school” and ensure that children from weaker sections and disadvantaged sections within three years of passing the act. Among the other important provisions of this section include maintenance of records of children upto 14 years residing in the jurisdiction, ensuring monitoring admission, attendance and completion of elementary education, providing the required infrastructure, providing trained facilities, quality education, ensuring timely completion of studies, training of faculty, ensuring admission of children of migrant families and other activities. Section 10 requires that every parent or guardian has to admit their child. An important

³OECD (2017), *OECD Skills Outlook 2017: Skills and Global Value Chains*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.74 (<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273351-en>).

⁴ Richard Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2006. He opines that in UK the shelf life of a set of skills is about seven years, after which they become redundant. Hence, there is a need for a worker to remain a ‘lifelong student’ and constantly acquire new skills if they have climb the labour market value chain.

⁵ “*Educational Statistics at a glance*”, 2018, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/ESAG-2018.pdf

provision of the Act is that it requires all schools including private schools to admit at least 25% of the total strength of the class children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups and to provide free and compulsory education. The government will reimburse these schools but this is subject to the school not receiving any other grant in the form of land, funds, etc. Section 13 requires that no capitation fee shall be collected.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To make the status survey with related to the implementation of RTE Act offered for the benefit of the students of elementary schools in Davanagere district.
- 2) To study the enrollment in elementary schools pre and after implementation of RTE Act.

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Right to Education (RTE) has been a matter of much debate – often without consensus. We review some of the more pertinent studies that are relevant to our perspective and area.

AnandTeltumbde (2012) is rather uncharitable about the need for RTE in the first place and opines that the “real reason for the RTE Act was to hide the massive failure of successive governments to keep the promises made in the constitution” and that the RTE is already enshrined in Article 45 as part of Directive Principles of State Policy. He opines that the RTE has come in handy by private schools to increase the fees since it mandates for 25% free education to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and the need for mandatory extra-curricular activities.

R.K. Mahto (2012) opines that the SSA had brought about significant improvement in the quality of education and enrollment in schools.

OjhaSeema.S. (2013), study reveals that RTE Act implementation there has seen some progress, albeit the progress is only in terms of enrollment and the establishment of some basic infrastructure. However, they opine that not much progress has been achieved in terms of guaranteeing quality education in terms of student learning as well as in all round performance.

Vandana Gandhi and Ms.NeetuYadav(2013) in their “A study of awareness among primary school teachers towards “Right to Education Act, 2009” – study reveals that there a significant difference in awareness of male and female primary school teachers towards RTE Act (2009). The offered various suggestions for improving awareness of teachers irrespective of gender, schools towards RTE Act (2009) for better implementation.

Bibhuti Bhushan Malik(2015) study the educational conditions of marginalized communities in parts of Uttar Pradesh as well as impact of RTE on expanding access to educational opportunities and status is interesting due to the fact that it mostly studied the working of implementation of RTE in 48 slums and 32 villages in Lucknow district. It opines that the levels of awareness are quite deplorable with most of the infrastructure being sufficient and where it was available, often students would not be allowed to access it. It points out that 62.5% of the students faced discrimination on the basis of gender, caste or religion and the behavior of teachers is governed by these categories and similar behavior. In short, “hierarchical mindsets and attitudes which are prevalent in the larger context of society affect interactions between students and teachers in the schools⁶.

Method Used

The study depended on a combination of methods drawn from quantitative and qualitative analysis underscored by the use of structured questionnaire interview. The quantitative analysis entailed a survey of 200 schools using a structured questionnaire based interviews.

Sample Selection

The study used the uniformly random selection method in Davanagere district in Karnataka. In each Taluk, based on the availability of the number of schools in Government, Aided and unaided

⁶ “RTE and Marginal Communities: A Perspective from the field”, *Economic and Political Weekly*,

category schools were selected. A random number using uniformly random method was used to select the schools.

4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There are benefits and improvements due to RTE in the expansion of school education in the district.
2. There is not much support in the form of teaching infrastructure among government and private schools in the district, which inhibits the optimization of benefits that may accrue from RTE.
3. There is no significant difference in enrollment in rural and urban schools pre and after implementation of RTE Act in elementary schools of Davanagere district.
4. Enrollment in government, aided and private schools do not differ significantly pre and after implementation of RTE Act.

5. TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

General data sheet for elementary schools,
Structured questionnaire and
Interview.

6. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The focus of our study has been to deploy statistical tools that can help measure these satisfaction levels optimally instead of deploying as many methods as possible. Hence, we have deployed the use of some of the useful and preferred methods such as Standard Deviation, cross tabulations, Chi-square, Average means apart from other methods such as frequency, percentages, averages, average mean and an assortment of others.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS SCHOOLS

There is an assortment of school, especially if we were to consider their date of establishment. A number of schools predate India's independence and have their origins in the princely state of Mysore. Approximately 20% (or 39) schools in the sample were established before 1947 while 14 schools (about 7%) are more than 100 years old (established before 1919). The oldest school in our sample dates back to 1884. Another 62 (or about 31%) were established before the turn of this century, i.e. in the period 1948 to 1999 while only 22 schools (or about 11%) were established after 2000. In totality, 115 schools (or about 58%) of the schools in our sample were established before the RTE came into existence. Hence, a majority of the schools in our sample predate RTE, indicating a number of challenges in the implementation of RTE. Interestingly, only one school was established after the passage of RTE. Hence, our study attempts to provide insights into how the older schools have adjusted to the dynamics introduced by the RTE - if at all they have adjusted. A total of 123 schools claim to have more than 25% of the students from economically weaker sections (EWS).

In our sample, 88 schools or 44% of the schools are government schools while 51 or 26% are aided schools (meaning private schools that receive grants-in-aid from the government). Apart from these 55 or about 30% of the schools are private schools. It is pertinent to note that 66 of these 88 schools (or 75%) of these government schools are in rural areas. Hence, a larger part of our sample consists of government schools, which are mostly in rural areas. It is imperative to note that the burden of expanding school education in the district has mostly fallen on the government.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (RURAL VS URBAN)

Our study has focused on rural as well as urban schools. In a country such as India, any study of the impact of education without understanding the rural dynamics is always anachronistic for the simple reason that a large part of our population resides in the villages. In our sample, 117 schools or about 58.5% are in rural areas while about 65 schools in the sample or about 32.5% of the schools are government schools. An insight gleaned from our study is that despite most of the schools being established before the passage of the RTE, the district has a unique aspect to its credit: most of the

students are in rural schools that are less than one kilometer from their place of residence. Our study indicates that 58 of the schools or about 25% of the total sample consists of rural schools where the distance to school for the pupil is one kilometer or less. This indicates that the reach of the education system was substantial even before access to education in terms of distance from home to school was incorporated into the RTE. Delving deeper into the responses, we place on record that about 126 of the total respondents or about 63% of the parents opined that the distance from the school was less than one kilometer while in about 48 cases (or 24%) it was more than one kilometer but less than two kilometers. Only in about 10% of the cases was the school beyond 5 kilometers. Only two cases of these was distance of school above 4 kilometers. Thus, it is clear that the spread of the education system had largely made schools accessible to pupils – something that was not the case before this century.

An aspect of our finding that requires special mention is that among the rural schools about 25% of sample consists of schools (or about 51 out of 199) where children from rural areas who are attending school are first generation students. Our findings are in consonance with the findings of various government reports that clearly point out an increasing trend of increased gross enrolment ratio (GER) among students in 2015-16 compared to the period 2000-01. The number of students in Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary level (class I to X) education in India increased from 1900 lakhs in 2000-01 to 2358 lakhs in 2015-16⁷. The expansion of rural government schools is independent of the existence of private schools. Only about 30 of the 199 schools in sample have the presence of another private school in their close vicinity (less than 1 kilometer radius). We opine that there is a high level of correlation between awareness about provisions of RTE and the location of the schools: only about 44 of the 199 schools (or 22%) in the rural areas have any awareness about RTE while in the urban areas only one parent claimed ignorance about RTE with a large majority knowing at least some provisions of the RTE.

AIDED AND UNAIDED SCHOOLS

There are 59 schools (or 29.5%) of the sample which are private in nature while there are 88 schools (or 44%) which are Aided schools. Among the aided schools in rural and urban areas there are 67 schools or 33.5% which are located at a distance of one kilometer or more.

Student Enrollment

Enrollment in School by Status of school and Locality - 2011 To 2018

	2011-12 (A)	2012-13 (B)	2013-14 (C)	2014-15 (D)	2015-16 (E)	2016-17 (F)	Current Year (G)
TOTAL : Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=200)	217.8	211.4	205.6	202.5	198.3	197.7	198.0
GOVERNMENT :Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=88)	165.4	161.1	157.2	156.9	152.8	151.0	147.6
AIDED: Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=52)	277.4	267.3	248.9	225.6	213.9	200.0	186.6
PRIVATE: Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=60)	244.2	236.6	238.8	249.3	252.5	265.4	282.5
RURAL: Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=117)	190.7	187.2	180.7	180.2	172.9	174.1	170.9
URBAN: Enrollment in the School in the following years (n=83)	257.2	248.1	242.8	236.0	236.5	233.2	232.4

⁷ Educational Statistics at a Glance (2018), Op.Cit, p.23.

INSIGHTS - ENROLLMENT

To understand the impact of RTE act on enrollment in the elementary schools of Davanagere District, we collected the data on number of students enrolled in the elementary schools for the period of 2011-2018 and the sample selection was a mix of both Rural and Urban schools. Further a mix of school types like Government, aided and private schools were also included in the sample. The key objective of the RTE act was to boost the enrollment. However when we look at the above table, the average number enrollment shows declining over the period. Further, the results of T-Test at 95% confidence level show that the enrollment in the Aided school is significantly decreased over the period.

The Student strength varies in the sample. There are 180 schools, or an overwhelming majority of the schools which are co-educational in their scope. Only five schools in the sample had students above 500 while 38 had between 200 to 299 students. Another 21 had from 300 to 399 students while another 8 schools had between 400 to 499 students. Of these about 39 schools (or about 20%) of the schools had a strength of 100 or less. An overwhelming number of schools, 86 (or about 43%) of the schools have a strength that varies from 101 to 200. Hence, a large part of our sample consists of smaller schools. The above results from our sample are indicative of the importance of the smaller schools in expanding the scope of RTE. Only one school had strength of more than 1000 students. A word about this school is in order since it is more of an outlier than the general norm in our sample. This school is a rural aided, minority school. Interestingly, this school has no students from Economically Weaker Sections. The teacher pupil ratio in this school has since 2010-11 varied from 47 to 134, clearly indicative of the challenges facing the implementation of RTE in private schools.

An important insight gleaned by us is in connection with the enrollment of the schools in the sample. The average students enrolled in schools in our sample has declined from an average of 218 students in 2010-11 to 198 students in 2016-17. Interestingly, a majority of the schools have witnessed a decline in intake of students with the last two years 2015-16 and 2016-17 wherein the number of schools that witnessed a decline in student strength was 119 and 104 respectively thereby indicating that more than 50% of the schools in the sample saw a decline in strength. There is a correlation between the location (rural vs urban) and the decline in enrolments. We find that nearly 70 of these schools (or about 67%) of the schools were rural schools.

The standard deviation for total enrolment for various years varies from 153.71 (2010-11) to 150 (2016-17). In contrast, the average mean for sample stands even lower at 95 for 2015-16 and 100 for 2016-17.

8. CONCLUSION

Thus, as the insights offered in the above pages indicate, the education system has made substantial progress. We encapsulate some of our findings briefly as part of our conclusions. Implementation of RTE Act in Davanagere district is not up to the mark

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

State government has to take initiation for the proper implementation of RTE Act provisions in all categories of schools irrespective of locality. Training and awareness must be given to stakes about RTE Act because most of the head masters and teachers are denied to give information under RTE Act provisions.

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