



RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT: - TO WHAT EXTENT HAS IT RUINED THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of RTE is to provide quality education to all children. But unfortunately, after 8 years of enactment of this act which was enacted with good intentions has proven a big failure. Ironically RTE has failed the no fail policy. In the context of RTE Act 2009, and the central and state government schemes of freeships, mid day meal, free books, uniforms, scholarships and financial assistance to children to promote enrolment and retention in school, the question arises whether the target is to make them merely literate or to empower them with skills of reading comprehension, writing and numeric ability along with the skills of questioning and answering correctly. The objective of this study was to test knowledge of slum children at primary level and to seek teacher's views on various schemes of Government i.e. "Freeships", "Midday Meals", "free books/ uniforms" "no failures/compulsory pass", "admission in grade according to age", and "no punishment", "Padho Punjab/Pravesh in the content of the RTE Act (2009). The result of this scheme is clearly reflected from poor performance of children. 93 percent teachers considered it not a right scheme and 73.5 percent teachers reported that children threaten and misbehave with them. Overall assessment of learning levels of slum children has painted a bleak picture of the standard of education in Govt. primary, middle/high schools in Punjab and calls for a large scope for improvement. There was no concordance between the actual performance of children in achievement test and the evaluation done by the teachers.

Keywords: - RTE, Slum Children, Implementation, Assessment, learning levels, Teacher' views.

Introduction: -

Development of a nation is contingent upon human resource development which is linked with education. The wealth of nations is to a large extent determined by the educational attainment and the health status of its population. Unfortunately, the explosion of population is a great set back to the development of progress of our country.

The RTE Act (2009) enforced in April 2010 accords free and compulsory education for all children in the age group 6-14 years, laying focus on access and quality of education to children. But unfortunately, RTE has failed no

fail policy. After overlooking RTE Act for 9 years, the present government feels that lack of pass-fail systems has led to deterioration in quality of learning in schools. Government has now realized that schools have only become schools for mid day meal as education and learning are missing.

The education crises have been on the forefront of policy making agenda. Since the inception of right to education Act, 2009 which was outcomes of long drawn debates of policymakers and other stakeholders in education sector, capacity in improving the status of the education sector remains dubious.

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The primary flaw of RTE act is its failure to recognize the causes of the education crises which is reflected as low quality education ascertained by low learning outcomes of students.

RTE act creates accountability on the government regarding the quantity and quality of teachers and operations of school. On the surface it might seem like the Act is giving teachers responsibility over learning outcomes. Studies quoted teachers reporting that they need not expend effort into teaching if students will automatically be passed to the next grade in any case (Ojha, 2013). Shortage of teachers, alarming pupil-teacher ratio, other official duties assigned to teachers, busyness in training programmes, poor infrastructure, non-availability of appropriate furniture for children with disabilities, non-availability of special aids and appliances, poor quality of aids and appliances for children with locomotor disabilities are major challenges in fulfillment of RTE to differently abled children (Soni, 2013).

In the last couple of decades, due to rapid urbanization there has been an unprecedented exodus of rural population, rushing to urban areas in the search of employment. No matter, the rural migrant population living in slums are providing service to the urbanities, the question arises are they adding to educational status of the city also. It was in this context; the present study was undertaken to assess the status of education in the slums of Punjab with special focus in respect of knowledge as the outcome of teaching and learning.

Review of related literature

The Hindu dated July 27, 2012 reported that RTE Act is vague regarding most vital aspect of education. Clearly, the RTE Act accords little importance to teaching standards, which is the major shortcoming in our educational system. Beyond these, the RTE Act is garnished with farcical, unworkable statements of good intent.

Mehendale, A. (2014) found that one of the key gaps in the Act in terms of quality is the

absence of reference to teachers' service conditions. The Act does not prohibit appointment of contractual and low-paid teachers. This is a major omission of one the critical ingredients or inputs in generation of quality in education and would therefore render the prescribed norms and standards on quality inadequate.

The tribune dated February 23, 2015 reported facts which came to light after study done regarding the implementation of the RTE Act in private schools. The study was funded by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Out of 9,300 private schools in the state, 1,170 have been closed due to non-compliance with the RTE norms.

Duggal (2016) revealed that no detention has hampered the quality of education. No examination and no failure Policy of RTE has led to very low standards and falling learning outcomes.. Students do not concentrate on their studies as they are aware that even without learning and performing poorly in tests, they will be promoted to the next class. No detention and no corporal punishment have led to difficulty in maintaining discipline.

Hindustan Times Mumbai, August 22, 2017, pointed out that that it has more misses than hits to its name. Policy issues, poor implementation mean not every child is getting the right to a free education, even after seven years of Right to Education Act. A major area of failure is the quality of education.

Times of India New Delhi, dated May 28, 2018 The national achievement survey has delivered a sharp indictment of 'No Detention policy' with learning outcomes deteriorates as student progress to higher classes. Teachers lost leverage over the students and also interest in bothering about outcomes. The no-detention policy, without adequate attention to ensure learning outcomes, meant that exams were treated in a cavalier manner.

Indian express dated July, 17 2018 brought out interesting facts. The Lok Sabha passed an amendment to the Right to Education Act, to re-introduce pass-fail system

in schools. "It is a broken education system. We have to rebuild our education system..

Objectives

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To test the knowledge attained by children as an outcome of teaching and learning.
2. To study teacher's views on the schemes of the government to promote elementary education.

Research Methodology

Survey method was followed to conduct the study.

The study was carried out on sample basis taking the five municipal corporation cities namely Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Patiala and Bathinda.

The sampling procedure involved a combination of purposive, incidental and random methods. The selection was purposive in nature as it comprised only urban slums under 5 municipal corporations and schools located near the slums.

Selection of Schools: -

The study was confined purposively to Government Primary and Middle / High Schools and Private Schools. That was in close proximity to the slums with the objective of assessing the learning levels of slum children. In

all 69 Government Primary, 16 Government Middle / High Schools and 9 Private schools were included in the study. In Ludhiana and Jalandhar, the selection was governed by the population of the town and number of slums centered around industry. In Amritsar, Patiala and Bathinda all the slums were covered in Toto. Total sample comprised of 69 slums. In all, 69 Government Primary, 16 Government Middle / High Schools and 9 Private schools were included in the study.

Tools used in the Study: -

As per requirement the data were gathered from slum children studying in schools and school teachers. Accordingly, the instruments were used which involved questionnaires cum interview schedules and achievement tests.

Analysis and Treatment of Data: -

The achievement tests were given in all the subjects being taught following the curriculum of Punjab School Education Board.

Comparing the test scores of the two independent samples, the government school children have an edge over the private school children in some of the subjects as well as in total test scores.

The following table: 1 shows comparison of academic performance of slum children in government and private schools.

Table:1 Comparative Performance of Class V Govt. and Private Schools in Achievement Tests

Subjects	Tests Scores of Government Schools							Test Scores of Private Schools						
	Male (1070)		Females (992)		Total (2062)		Grade	Male (68)		Females (49)		Total Sample (117)		Grade
	M	%	M	%	M	%		M	%	M	%	M	%	
Punjabi	9.51	63.4	10.38	69.2	9.93	66.2	B	5.33	35.5	6.61	44.1	5.81	38.7	D
Hindi	6.59	43.9	7.5	50.3	7.05	47.0	D	5.67	37.8	7.17	47.8	6.23	41.5	D
English	3.40	22.7	3.9	26.5	3.68	24.5	E	4.08	27.2	4.78	31.9	4.34	28.9	E
Maths	6.42	42.8	6.5	43.7	6.48	43.0	D	5.82	38.8	5.52	36.8	5.71	38.1	D
EVS	10.08	67.2	10.75	71.7	10.40	69.3	B	6.49	43.3	6.39	42.6	6.45	43.0	D
Totals	35.99	47.98	39.21	52.28	37.54	50.03		27.38	36.5	30.48	40.6	25.83	38.0	
Grade		D		C		C			D		D		D	

Source: IDC Survey

Concordance between Achievement Test Scores and Teacher's Assessment.

The comparison was made between scores and equivalent grade obtained in the test scores and the rating given by the teachers in each of the academic subjects. The following table 2 represents the two type of data.

Table: 2 Subject wise Percentage of Test Scores, Equivalent Grade, and Teachers' Ratings

Subject	Class V		Teachers' Rating	N	%	Class VIII		Teachers' Ratings	N	%
	% Score	Grade				% Score	Grade			
Punjabi	66.2	B	Poor	76	90.0	27.2	E	Average	18	100.0
Hindi	47.0	D	Good	78	92.9	40.6	D	Average	11	61.0
English	24.5	E	Average	65	77.4	23.3	E	Average	14	77.8
Maths	43.2	D	Good	57	67.9	23.5	E	Average	9	50.0
Science	-	-	-	-	-	29.3	E	Average	18	100.0
EVS	69.3	B	Average	65	77.4	-	-	-	-	-
Social Studies	-	-	-	-	-	9.5	E	Average	18	100.0

Source: IDC Survey

Teachers rated the children being average in all subjects irrespective of poor or good score in various subjects. In each subject, at both levels of primary and upper primary classes there was no concordance between the actual performance of children in achievement test and evaluation done by the teachers.

Teachers' views on the schemes of the Government about the Elementary Education.

The views were obtained from primary and upper primary teachers regarding implementation of the schemes such as "Compulsory free education", "free books and uniforms", "no failures/compulsory pass", "admission in grade according to age", and "no punishment", "Padho Punjab/Pravesh".

Mid-day Meal Scheme:

Merit: It provides at least one square meal and nutrition to poor as reported by 75.5 percent teachers.

Demerit: According to 81.4 percent teachers, mid-day meal wastes precious time of teachers.

Free books/uniforms:

Merits: A great help for poor children reportedly 100 percent children.

Demerits: 57.8 percent teachers expressed that the scheme promotes discrimination among children and 77.4 percent teachers expressed it is a cause of constant tussle between teachers and parents.

Schemes with only demerits:

Admission according to age equivalent grade was not approved by 93 to 100 percent teachers.

Age equivalent Grade:

93.1 percent of teachers did not approve of it as a right scheme.

Compulsory pass, No failure: Unconditional promotion:

The teachers are apprehensive as they view that the scheme is dangerous in itself because with no fear of being failed, the children have lost interest in studies. Then scheme is considered to be very harmful by majority of the teachers.

No Punishment: -

82.3 percent teachers reported that children are getting out of control and 70.0 percent teachers condemned this scheme. Children threaten teachers as reported by 73.5% teachers.

Padho Punjab/Pravesh: -

81.4 percent teachers found that the scheme is beneficial to students weak in studies.

Conclusion:

The failure to implement the RTE act provision has resulted in decline in education performance when it comes to implementation of RTE act, the situation is worse in Punjab. In India, acts are not implemented with true spirit which thwarts the wheel of progress of our nation due to lack of commitment and responsibility. Not only students, even teachers have lost interest and enthusiasm. The accountability has become minimal on the part of teachers. No detention policy had aggravated the challenge of motivating teachers and students. No exams and no failure policy have led to fall standards of education and levels of learning. No corporal punishment has led to difficulty in maintaining discipline. Reflecting on the poor performance of class VIII children, one wonders is because of poor delivery of teachers or because of non-serious, motivated children who come to school to pass time. Under the present system of elementary

education with the implementation of such schemes as 'unconditional promotions' and 'no failure' in order to examine the indices of learning, understanding and mastery of the subject matter as an outcome of teaching and learning, other than free education, midday meals, free books and uniform, The only beacon of hope is the scheme under the banner 'Padho Punjab/pravesh' which help children weak in studies.

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