

An Appraisal of Right to Education Act and Status of Elementary School Education in Punjab

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Abstract

Learning is a lifelong process, as the process of discovering what's within never ends. Still it is the formal institutional training which provides the basic foundation to the process of learning as the time we introduced to formal education is in school only. The school years are the grounding years of education. Schools are institutions that lay the foundation of a child. It is in the schools where the young educational talent is recognized and nurtured. Education is also a fundamental requirement in a democracy.

Through education people become, more informed and responsible citizens, who are capable of exercising wise choices. And finding their voices in politics. It is essential for eradicating poverty, by allowing people to play more productive roles and to earn better for living.

The Right to Education Act is probably the first of its kind legislation that puts the responsibilities of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the Government. Any cost that prevents a child from accessing school will be borne by the State which shall have the responsibility of enrolling the child as well as ensuring attendance and completion of 8 years of schooling.

No child shall be denied admission for want of documents; no child shall be turned away if the admission cycle in the school is over and no child shall be asked to take an admission test. Children with disabilities will also be educated in the mainstream school.

Keywords: Child, Constitutional Amendment, Dropout Rate, Fundamental Rights, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Legal Entitlement, Universalization of Elementary Education

Introduction

Education is not only an instrument of enhancing efficiency but also an effective tool of augmenting and widening democratic participation and upgrading the overall quality of individual and society

India has a vast population and to capture the potential demographic dividend to remove the acute regional, social and gender imbalances, the Government is committed to make concerted efforts for improving the quality of education as mere quantitative expansion will not deliver the desired results in view of fast changing domestic and global scenario. Before 1976, education was the exclusive responsibility of the States.

The Constitutional Amendment of 1976, which included education in the Concurrent List, was a far -reaching step. The substantive financial and administrative implication required a new sharing of responsibility between the Union Government and the States.

While the role and responsibility of the States in education remained largely unchanged, the Union Government accepted a larger responsibility of reinforcing the national and integrated character of education maintaining quality and standard including those of the teaching profession at all levels and the study and monitoring of the educational requirement of the country. By the 86th Amendment of the Constitution in 2002, Article 21A was inserted in the Constitution which provides for free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in order to put in place a suitable legislation as envisaged under Article 21A. the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 was passed by the Parliament on 4

August 2009 and the RTE was published in the Gazette of India on 27 August 2009. The RTE Act, Inter alia, seeks to provide that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. The Constitution (Eighty -sixth amendment) Act 2002 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 have come into force w.e.f 1 April 2010

Salient features of the Act of 2009 Preamble of the 2009 Act is as follows: "An Act to provide for free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years."

1. The salient features of the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education act are
2. Free and compulsory education to all children of India in the six to 14 age groups;
3. No child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until completion of elementary education;
4. A child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then, he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age. Provided that where a child is directly admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age, then, he or she shall, in order to be at par with others, have a right to receive special training, in such a manner, and within such limits, as may prescribed; provided further that a child so admitted to elementary education shall be entitled to free education till completion of elementary education even after fourteen years. A child who completes elementary education shall be awarded a certificate.
5. Calls for a fixed student-teacher ratio;
6. Will apply to all of India except Jammu and Kashmir
7. Provides for 25 percent reservation for economically disadvantaged communities in admission to Class One in all private schools
8. Mandates improvement in quality of education;
9. School teachers will need adequate professional degree within five years or else will lose job;
10. School infrastructure (where there is problem) to be improved in three years, else recognition cancelled;

11. Financial burden will be shared between state and central government. In this context it is pertinent to have a historical overview of the development of education in India.

Research Questions

1. Does the passage of rte act has improved the quality of school education at ground level?
2. Does RTE is delivering what it has promised?
3. Does RTE helped in decreasing the school dropout rate?
4. Does RTE helped in improving the gross enrolment ratio?

Research Methodology

The present study is based on the secondary sources, which is collected from office records, files and documents, and reports of various commissions, books, journal, thesis, dissertations, internet, newspapers and annual reports of various educational institutions.

Role of states in school Education The subject of education is in the Concurrent list of the Constitution and hence, looked after by the union as well as state government in India. The role of Union Government is much restricted to policy making and funding whereas the states take the entire responsibility of implementing the various policies and programmes prepared and sponsored by the union government. The States follow the major guidelines laid by the central government and make variations in some of the programmes to suit their local needs. The situation in the state of Punjab, the state under present study, is no different as the education including elementary education for all purposes is looked after by the state. Here it is pertinent to have a look over at the educational administration in Punjab for the present study.

Educational Profile of Punjab

The Indian state Punjab lies in the northwest of India. The Indian state borders the Pakistani province of Punjab to the west, Jammu and Kashmir to the north, Himachal Pradesh to the north east. Haryana to the south and south east and Rajasthan to the south west. The total area of the state is 50, 362 square kilometres and the total population is 2.77 crore. Below is a brief statistical profile of state of elementary education in Punjab.

Table 1.0
Numbers of Primary Schools in Punjab

Year	Boy's School (in number)	Boy's School (in percentage)	Girl's School (in number)	Girl's School (in percentage)	Total Schools
1979	12200	98.5	192	1.5	12392
1984	12174	98.7	159	1.3	12333
1989	12207	98.6	165	1.4	12372
1994	12326	98.5	183	1.5	12509
1999	11808	98.6	163	1.4	11971
2000	12894	98.9	182	1.1	13026
2001	12892	98.6	182	1.4	13074
2011	15611	99.2	127	0.8	15768

Source: Talwar Deepak and Dr. Meenu, "State of Primary Education Punjab " *international Journal of Social sciences and Humanities Research* vol.2, Issue-2, pp: 3.

Table 1.1
Number of Primary School Students in Punjab

Year	Boys (in thousands)	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (in thousands)	Girls (Percentage)	Total (in thousands)
1979	1140	55.1	927	44.9	2067
1984	1088	54.9	897	45.1	1985
1989	1108	53.9	947	46.1	2055
1994	974	52.8	871	47.2	1845
1999	880	52.0	812	48.0	1692
2000	970	52.4	880	47.6	1850
2001	948	52.3	863	47.7	1811
2011	734	53.11	648	46.89	1382

Source: Talwar Deepak and Dr. Meenu, " State of Primary Education in Punjab " International Journal of social sciences and Humanities Research vof.2, Issue - 2, pp:5

Table 1.2
Teacher Pupil Ratio

Year	Ratio
1979	1:40
1989	1:38
2000	1:42
2001	1:44
2011	1:68

Source: Talwar Deepak and Dr. Meenu, " State of Primary Education in Punjab " International Journal of social sciences and Humanities Research vof.2, Issue - 2, pp:5

Table 1.3

Dropout Rate at Primary Level as per District Information System for Education (DISE) in Punjab (2009-2010 and 2012-2013)

Year	Average Annual Drop Out Rate
2009-10	4.73
2010-11	1.82
2011-12	1.8
2012-13	1.55

Source: <http://www.indiastat.com> as on 15 Sept 20 15

Conclusion and suggestions

After the analysis of the data from secondary sources and the following issues has been identified and hence some specific suggestions can be made as following:-

1. As for as the provisions in the right to education act is concerned it is recommended that RTE should the centralized the administrative structure of elementary education. The bill should provide more structural and financial autonomy to local bodies.

2. RTE must cover children below 6 years of age as the basic foundation of the children should be late earlier and the RTE act is silent about the pre schooling stage of education.
3. There is a need for active involvement participation and awareness on the part of parents, teachers and local bodies to ensure the retention of gross enrolment ratio in schools.
4. Besides ensuring improved infrastructure in schools there is a need to tackle the hidden challenges like, poor roads and transport facilities, social taboos, safety of girl child to keep in check the incidences of dropout rate .

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