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A thematic review on right to education and its implementation: Finding space

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Abstract

Effort has been made in this paper to make a sketch on right to education and its implementation based on related review of literature. It has been found that right of children to free and compulsory education act (RTE) was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2009 mandates free and compulsory education of all children of 6-14 years age until they complete elementary education in a neighbourhood school. However, it has been reported that only 5% of the schools were following RTE guidelines as stated by the convener of RTE Forum. Additionally, there were problems, such as shortage of teachers, untrained teachers in some places, Para-teachers and student-teacher ratio and there is also problem of school drop-outs. Student dropout problem is however, faced by all developed and developing countries of the world. It is common knowledge that financial constraints or domestic chores are the main reasons cited by people for dropping out of education. The National Sample Survey shows that 13 out of every 100 Indians between 5-29 years did not attend school or dropped out because they did not consider education as necessary. It has been also reported that overall females receive less education than males and they tend to dropout and withdrawn earlier for both economic and social-culture reasons. Based on the relevant results, it has been indicated that large categorization of children with special education need might be, in some cases, a viable way for teachers to justify under achievement, and thus act as a rationale for these children to dropout.

Keywords: RTE, drop-outs, financial constraints, social-cultural, economic condition

1. Introduction

The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 passed by the Indian Parliament in 2009 mandates free and compulsory education of all children of 6-14 years age until they complete elementary education in a neighbourhood school. There is also a reference of children with disabilities who are to be given elementary education in the age range of 6-18 year of age as defined in clause (i) of section 2 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection and Full Participation) Act, 1996 in accordance with the provisions of Chapter V of the said Act. The Act also has a provision for every child, who is above six years of age and has not yet been admitted to any school or could not complete his/her elementary education due to any reason, to be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age. The child admitted under age appropriate admission has a right to receive special training or additional instruction in order to be at par with other children of the class.

Table 1: Average annual drop-out rate in school education in India

Year	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary			Senior Secondary		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
2011-12*	5.89	5.34	5.62	2.13	3.20	2.65	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2012-13*	4.68	4.66	4.67	2.30	4.01	3.13	14.54	14.54	14.54	NA	NA	NA
2013-14*	4.53	4.14	4.34	3.09	4.49	3.77	17.93	17.79	17.86	1.48	1.61	1.54

*Figures related to school education are provisional

Source: For School Education: National University of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi (website: <http://dise.in/>)

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Student dropout problem is faced by all developed and developing countries of the world. In developing countries dropout rate are remarkably high, even for the basic school going children (Graeff-Martins, 2006).

Table-1 shows that in India the average annual dropout in boy is more than girl in primary education. However, the rate of dropout is high in case of girl than boy in upper primary. Large numbers of children complete their high school education in many developed countries, but in United States more than one million students drop out each year. Seven thousand students in USA left their school in a day. Times of India New Delhi dated June 30, 2012 brought out interesting facts. It reported that only 5% of the schools were following RTE guidelines as stated by the convener of RTE Forum. Additionally, there were problems, such as shortage of teachers, untrained teachers in some places, Para-teachers and student-teacher ratio. "Majority of the schools have not fulfilled these norms. It would be impractical to derecognize them all. Hence the extension has been given," said Mahavir Mane, state director of primary education. Hindustan Times Mumbai, July 20 reported that only 103 schools in the city had fulfilled the norms. Majority of the schools have missed implementing two to three norms like kitchen sheds, ramps, and pupil-teacher ratio, which schools say are difficult to follow practically. Mane added that individual schools will be given time depending on which infrastructure they need to build. Though relieved, some schools fear, the time given might not be sufficient. Even schools that have been pulled up for not having big classrooms will not be able to meet this deadline. The RTE requires classrooms to be at least 400 square feet, but most city schools have only 300 to 350 square feet.

The Indian Express Ahmadabad, June 05 2013 stated that three years after the implementation of RTE Act, the state government passed a resolution to reserve 25 percent seats for economically weaker section (EWS) and disadvantaged groups in unaided private schools. Planned to be implemented in phases from the academic session 2013-14, the government has roped in eight municipal corporations and reserved 5,300 seats for children from EWS and disadvantaged groups. The implementation is expected to begin from cities. Though the number of seats per district has been divided, the municipal commissioners along with district education officers (DEO) and administrative officers and chairman of municipal school boards have also been directed to identify and divide these seats among private schools where these children will be provided free education. The state, that implemented the RTE Act April 1, 2010, has already received a lot of flak for its failure to implement 25 percent reservation in private unaided schools while all other provisions for the RTE Act were already notified. As per the notification, put out on May 23, a copy of which is with this paper, not only reservation has been made for 25 percent of total seats in Class-I in private schools, the government have also elaborately defined EWS and disadvantaged groups, both in order of priority.

The RTE Act 2009 promises every child in the age group of six to 14 years, including differently abled children, the right to free and compulsory education. To be implemented by the states by 2013, the Act also had provisions for providing home-based services to those children who are unable to go to schools. Uttar Pradesh was the first state in the country, along with Andhra Pradesh, to start bridge courses and pre-integration courses for visually and hearing impaired children. Around 60 students in the age group of six and 14 years and five special educators for training these

children are part of the camp held each year for 10 months in each district.

Hindustan Times Mumbai, September 01, 2013, The Right to Education Act made sure, that children with disabilities and special needs get a shot at mainstream schools. But city schools are yet to make sure they are equipped to accommodate them, say experts. Many schools do not have facilities such as ramps or toilets for children in a wheelchair. Nor do they have counsellors to enable students with special needs to study alongside a regular student. The state government has now given schools a deadline to set their house in order.

2. Reasons for Students Dropout

School dropout has been defined as leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential (most often a higher secondary education diploma). It is common knowledge that financial constraints or domestic chores are the main reasons cited by people for dropping out of education. But data from the National Sample Survey (NSSO) shows that 13 out of every 100 Indians between 5-29 years did not attend school or dropped out because they did not consider education "necessary."

Jordan *et al.* (1994) ^[20] explained pressures on students of push and pull dropout factors. A student is pushed out when adverse situations within the school environment lead to consequences, ultimately resulting in dropout. Students can be pulled out when factors inside the student divert them from completing school. Watt and Roessingh (1994) ^[30] added a third factor called falling out of school, which occurs when a student does not show significant academic progress in schoolwork and becomes apathetic or even disillusioned with school completion. It is not necessarily an active decision, but rather a "side-effect of insufficient personal and educational support"

In Asia situation is not different from other developing countries. Researcher found that the reasons of students' school dropouts are financial problems and expenses dropout rate is high. Students drop out their school to fulfil their financial needs (Rani, 2011). Another reason of students' dropouts is that some parents are not interested in education for their children. Dropout rate in Bangladesh is also high as in other developing countries. According to Bangladesh News.Com that 1.7 million students were enrolled in secondary education level in the year 2005 to 2006, but about 0.7 million students' dropout without completing their secondary education and higher secondary education examination in 2007. At university level dropout rate is not different from secondary and higher secondary level. ASA University of Bangladesh started working in 2007 and number of enrolled students was larger than other private universities of Bangladesh. If there is less contribution of parents' interest for their Childs' education then there are greater possibilities of student dropout (Jeynes, 2007). Students' dropouts were lower in such schools that offered second shift programme (Chaurd and Mingat, 1996).

In European Union students drop out is due to their weak financial position before completing their higher education course. A study on USA identified that many student dropout their school because students found their classes boring, absence from school for long time and unable to manage their work, consuming time with those who are not interested in study, unnecessary freedom to do everything

and failure in class were the main reasons for which student left their school during their education (Bridge land, Dilulio & Morison, 2006). Substandard primary education system, deficiency of training in teaching staff, and parent teacher relationship are the major reasons of dropouts in Pakistan (Mohsin *et al.*, 2004). Researcher stated that in Pakistan twenty seven million children does not entered in any school and seven million does not get primary education (Riazul Haq, 2013). The UNDP Millennium Development Goals report states that Pakistan will not be able to achieve its education goals until 2015. Approximately 50% of enrolled children drop out before completing primary education. It has been observed that 79% of dropouts are from low-income families in 1977 (Staff writer, 2007).

3. Measures to Curb the Menace of Students Dropout

Out of school children refers to total school age children who are not enrolled in any level of education (pre-primary, primary, Post primary, secondary) expressed as a percentage of the official school age population in given school year (Berliner, 2009) [3]. Halmes (2003) [18] found that overall females receive less education than males and they tend to dropout and withdrawn earlier for both for economic and social culture reasons. Kadzamura and Rose (2003) [21] indicated that when the cost of schooling is too high for households in Malawi it is often girls from poorest households who are less likely to attend. According to Kholer (1992) [22] family background, personal problem and school related factor are reasons for school dropout. Dropout rate is higher in rural than urban and peri-urban area. Sharma *et al.* (2007) evaluated the possible causes of dropout among girls and asserted that parental pressure, lack of interest, poverty in the households, household works and large family size influence of the dropout. The PROBE report (1999) indicated that health problems are the most important reason for dropout.

Calclough *et al.* (2000) [11] found that distance to school, poor quality of education inadequate facilities, overcrowded classroom inappropriate language of instruction, teacher's absenteeism and, in the case of girls' school safety are common causes of school dropouts. Poor school quality is associated with poor academic results with higher level of repetition and dropout and with lower progression ratios to higher levels of the educational system. Alcazar *et al.* (2006) [1] indicated that teachers' absences in schools are the most important factor of students' dropout. Ekstrom *et al.* (1997); showed that early schools leaving at the secondary level was the outcome of a long process of disengagement of children with measurable indicators that exist in the early grades. Batbaatar *et al.* (2006) indicated that in some schools which were being encouraged to reach higher performance standards, children with poor academic results were being to dropout. Lynch (2001) indicated that the large categorization of children with special education need might be, in some cases, a viable way for teachers to justify under achievement, and thus act as a rationale for these children to dropout. Finn (1993) [17]; Maelor & Midgely (1996); Wehloge, Rutter, Smith, Lesko & Fernandez (1989) reported that early academic achievement and engagement like regular attendance, misbehaviour in elementary and middle school, predicted withdrawal from high school student engagement include student participation identification with school or social bonding, academic performance.

In view of the above it can be said that the problems are mostly economic, social, infrastructural and administrative in nature. Therefore, a well-designed concerted efforts need to be developed to curb the menace of students dropout both at developed and under-developing countries.

4. Conclusion

Government has enacted and implemented the Act in the right fortitude towards providing quality elementary education to all. Most of the investigated schools are able to fulfil basic infrastructure except a few but with regard to curriculum, assessment, teachers training and other related issues they are lagging far behind. The observation and findings from the review show a wide gap between what was expected and what has so far been done. The findings show that so far there has been some progress only in terms of enrolment/basic infrastructure but towards guaranteeing quality education in terms of student learning the state has to go a long way. Further, from the findings of the study, it can be concluded that most of the parents are aware about the free education provided to the students of elementary schools. But, many of them are not aware of the benefits provided to the children. Similarly students are also not aware of their rights. Therefore, it is call for the day that parents and children should be made aware about the benefits and provisions provided in the Act. There is a need to forge partnerships among state, school functionaries, voluntary agencies, parents and other stakeholders. Intensive efforts are required at all evils since secluded efforts do not bring the required results.

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