

## **The State of Education in Post Right to Education Act 2010: Cumulative Enrolment with Humiliating Learning.**

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The Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE) which came into effect on April 2010, is about to complete its third year in the month of April 2013. The Act has been enacted not to register children in school but to endow with them quality education. The act mandates for the government that “every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till completion of elementary education” and ensure good quality elementary education” (Government of India, 2009). The overall, enrollment rates continues to rise but the reading levels and learning outcomes is declining.

In a historic move Indian Parliament passed Right to Education Act in 2009, on 4 August 2009, and joined the club of 135 countries of the world which provide children Right to Education. The apex court of the country threw its weight behind the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The court upheld the constitutional validity of RTE Act that guarantees children free and compulsory education from the age of 6 to 14 years of age<sup>1</sup>.

The act was widely praised and appreciated across the society by educationists, sociologists, academicians, politicians and others. The act had also many critics who raised two major issues related to the act, one, related pre-school education as the act does not cover pre-school education; and two, that the act “offers no vision of systematic reforms leading to a decent common school” (Krishna Kumar, 2010). The concern of quality was virtually ignored by all. There was only a smattering numbers who explicitly voiced on the issue related to the quality of education. Though the fistful persons articulated their concern related to quality of education at that moment. The quality of education imparted at schools is on decline, reading degrees and learning outcomes across states has shown downward trend.

The Annual Education Status Report 2012 published by NGO Pratham, was released by Union Human Resource Development Minister M. M. Pallam Raju on 18, April 2013 in Delhi. The report carried out in the last months of 2012, covered about six

lakh children and 3.3 lakh households in more than 16,000 villages in 567 districts of the country (PRISCILLA JEBARAJ 2013,). The report revealed that the quality of education imparted at schools is slipping every year. The report documents, more than 50 per cent (53.2%) children in Standard V could not read a standard 2<sup>nd</sup> level text. This proportion has jumped from 46.3% (2010) to 51.80% (2011) and 53.2% (2012). The condition in government schools is darker. For standard V children enrolled in government schools, the percentage of children unable to read Std. II level text has increased from 49.3% (2010) to 56.2% (2011) to 58.3% (2012).

The report reads that “the percentage of all children enrolled in Std. III who cannot read a Std. I level text has increased steadily from 53.4% (2009) to 54.4% (2010) to 59.7% (2011) to 61.3% in 2012. For children enrolled in government schools, this figure has increased from 57.6% in 2010 to 64.8% in 2011 to 67.7% in 2012.” The number of children in government schools who can properly recognise numbers up to 100 has dropped to 50 per cent from 70 per cent over the last four years.

According to the report, of all children enrolled in standard V, 29.10% (2010) could not solve simple two-digit subtraction problems with borrowing. This proportion increased to 39% in 2011 and further to 46.5% in 2012. From 2011 to 2012 there is 10 per cent drop in the ability of standard V children enrolled in government schools to do basic subtraction, the report reports.

The report notes that the proportion of all children enrolled in standard V who are unable to do division problems has increased from 63.8% in 2010 to 72.4% in 2011 to 75.2% in 2012.

In ASER 2012, across rural India, 48.9% children enrolled in standard V could read English words. Thus more than 50% children in the standard V could not read English words.

The quality which is considered the “heart of education” of education seems on slip in Indian schools since Right to Education Act 2009 was enacted. Madhav Chavan, CEO-President, Pratham Education Foundation codes “Learning levels started dropping in many states since RTE came into effect. Coincidence? Correlation? Or, causation? We noted for the first time in ASER 2011 that levels of reading and math at every level were not only poor but declining in many states. With one more year of data, this observation is strengthened”<sup>2</sup>.

The Right to Education Act (RTE) has come under direct fire for worsening quality of education in schools. “There has been a feeling that RTE may have led to relaxation of classroom teaching since all exams and assessments are scrapped and no child is

kept back. Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation is now a part of the law and several states are attempting to implement some form of CCE as they understand it,” Madhav Chavan, has written in ASER 2012.

The very purpose of the RTE is being lost and the act is thrown into winds. The act ensures good quality of education. Education without quality cannot be said to be education. The quality of education is a solution to many crisis of education especially those highlighted by the ASER 2012, whether it is increase in the number of private schools and in their enrollment, decline in overall enrollment especially of girls, poor learning etc. Had there been quality education in government schools which are still attend by the majority of the children of the country one would not have figured proportion of out of school children on rise. Neither would have one come across the increasing number of private schools and rise in their enrollment. The quality of education is antidote to all those issues surfaced in the ASER 2012. UNESCO (2005) “that quality was at the ‘heart of education’- a fundamental determinant of enrollment, retention and achievement (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005)<sup>3</sup>.

## **Reference**

- [1] ASER (2013): Annual Status of Education Report ( Rural). (New Delhi. ASER Centre) Jebaral, Priscilla: (2013) Reading Writing and Arithmetic Levels Falling. The Hindu 19 January.
- [2] Kumar, Krishna (2010) India’s Children Have a Precious Right. The Hindu. 3 April UNESCO (2004): Education for All: The Quality Imperative. (France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

## **End Notes**

1. The RTE Act 2009 was sub judicious as the petitions were filed against the constitutional validity of the act by the Society for Unaided Private Schools of Rajasthan; the Independent School Federation of India; the Catholic Bishops Conference of India and other institutions. A Bench of Chief Justice S. H. Kapadia and Justices Swatanter Kumar and K. S. Radhakrishnan dismissed the petitions.
2. ASER 2012, p1
3. UNESCO (2004) EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, p29.