

Twenty five percent reservation in private schools under RTE Act: Problems and priorities

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Abstract

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education is a milestone to provide free and compulsory education of all children on the age group of 6 to 14 years. Since its implementation 2010 April, RTE ACT is trying to reach its major goals by many ways. In sub-clause (iii) and (iv) it is stated that private schools shall have to provide 25% reservation in admission of their total class strength, from the weaker and disadvantaged section of society and should provide free and compulsory elementary education till its completion with the help of government expenditure. Yet, because of some arising issues and problems, private schools are failing to implement this 25% facet wholly in providing free and compulsory education. This paper is based on interaction with few functionaries and analysis of research paper and newspaper articles to focus upon some major issues are being faced by them to follow it. It also enlists some priorities for implementing this component in private schools for achieving quality education for socially disadvantaged section.

Keywords: RTE Act, 25% reservation, problems, priorities

Introduction

The Government of India enacted the Right to Education Act, 2009 under Article 21A in the Indian constitution making Education a fundamental Right. The rules have been framed by the respective State governments with respect to implementation of this Act. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. Section 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act stipulates of 25% reservation of free seats for children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups (EWS) in all private unaided primary schools while admitting students to Class 1 (Tucker & Sahgal, 2012). It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children from poor and other category families. The World Bank education specialist for India, Sam Carlson (2012), has observed: "The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring school enrollment, attendance and completion on the Government. It is the parents' responsibility to send the children to schools in the U.S. and other countries". UNESCO World Education scenario report (Carol Bellamy, 2000) highlights that the right to education was given way back in 1966 at the Covenant through the Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). For education to be a meaningful right it must be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Tomasevski, 2004). The concept of these four as was developed by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski, and it is one of the best ways to assess and act upon the situation. India has taken a step towards making the education reachable the Right to Education Act. In order to make this Act, children must reach the benefits of the RTE Act, there must be proper mechanisms in place. As such good school infrastructure, able and committed teachers, concerned educational authorities and responsible parents are all necessary to provide education to the children.

Since its day of announcement, the government tries to implement its 25 % reservation facet for disadvantages and weaker section children in class 1 admission in private schools with free of cost till their class viii completion. But because of some arising issues and related problems, the private school authorities are falling to accept this in their institutions.

Some issues and problems

Lack of sufficient government finance help

RTE Act states that the private schools should private 25% reservation in admission for disadvantaged section and continue their education till the completion. And the government should be the whole expenditure of that percentage of students for every year. But it is in the written form only. Actually private schools are not getting such kinds of government financial help for the implication of the act. Sometimes, they are being provided financial help very poor and too late by the government official process. That's why private school authority is being demotivated to follow this facet effectively.

Burden on private school

Without sufficient government financial help, it will be a great burden on private school to implement such thing. If it is imposed on private school it have to collect differences of fees from remaining 75% of children parents and if will be unaffordable situation among them. Even many of the schools may not overcome the situation and shut down the schools.

Costly of private schools infrastructure

We all know that most of the private school are very well infrastructure to run the teaching learning process. Every classroom are smart classroom. Therefore, they have also good quality teachers to pay. To supervise this type of school, the authority should need a big amount of economy for each years if they provide free education for 25% students up to age of 14,

they will face difficulty to maintain their infrastructure, teachers payment and others because of 25% free education and they take a minimum charges for this expenditure from the parents.

Hamper the school quality

To follow this act private schools facing many problem among them hammer on school quality is one. Private schools are also trying to reduce this burden by decreasing the number of teachers, cutting the extra curriculum activities from the syllabus, reducing the teaching learning materials following low quality and unauthenticated textbook etc. which in other way, hammer the quality of education for both section students.

Negative attitude of authority

It is a traditional concept in our country that students of weaker and disadvantage section are very low quality in study. If they are being provided reservation in schools the quality of learning and result will be poor which onwards spells bad impact on school dignity. Because of that wrong thing, the private authority does not give importance on this act.

Medium of instruction of private school

Generally, all the private schools are following English language for the medium of instruction in syllabus and curriculum making, textbook examination guideline. But the disadvantage section's children not cop up the English language to run their course regularly. Therefore the authority does not want 25% student to take admission without a minimum entrance test and ignore the act.

Gap between private and government school

In Indian school situation, there is a wide gap between private and government schools in teaching learning quality, results, school management, administration, infrastructure availability, economic investment etc. We all observe that such cases private schools are highly qualitative and effective managed and invested by the authority themselves, not by the government. Because of that most of the private school are not interested to follow and provided such government facilities. And this creates gradually a social disintegration among the students that most of the good quality students are going to take admission in private schools on the parents wishing.

Lack of government monitoring

According to this act, the both governments, state and central should monitor the private school and school management process regularly through the team members. They should observe whether the school authority properly follow 25% observation policy to weaker section or not. If not what are the problems they are facing? But in our country, such kinds of monitoring process through the both government authority are not available. That's why, the private authority run their schools by their own guidelines, instruction and ignore the 25% policy.

Business mined authority

Though, the quality of private school education is high and good, the authority of such schools is always commercial mined. They look their profits more and more from running their schools. They do not bother about the condition of

parents of the students. The authority themselves investe economy to run such type of business making institution. So naturally, they are looking for high fees in the form of admission, examination, establishment, maintenance etc. and sometimes ignore totally the government orders like reservation policy.

Lack of local management committee

The private schools have their own management committee with some parents representatives to run the school smoothly, here the local authority or the local government has no such kinds of power to supervise the school administrative process like the government schools. Because of their lack of management committee, the private school authority runs their school according to their own way and guidelines. This type of lack free them from the implementation of 25% reservation policy for disadvantages in class I admission.

Communication gap between central and state government

It is true that there is a big gap communication central and state government in the proper implementation of RTE Act since 2010. The state is not properly observing and supervising the private schools for the implementation of 25% reservation policy. Even the state is not communicating to central government in reporting about the condition and state of private schools whether they are following 25% reservation for weaker section or not. So the policy makers and the central government are not being informed about the implementation of policy in private schools and the private schools are running their schools whatever they are wishing without follow it.

Poverty of disadvantage community

It is a true fact that the disadvantage community are suffering for poverty since independence in our country. They are struggling for their lives by earning livelihood in many ways. Though the RTE Act provides 25% reservation and free education till the completion of class 8th, for schooling some minimum internal and external fees are being charged by the private authority to continue their course. But because of their so called poverty the parents fail to continue their children education in private school and 25% reservation is not being filled up by the students from the weaker section.

Issue of tax paying for private school

One of the big problems of private school is that it is run by an autonomous private organization by taking the government legal permission in a certain government provided location or in other places. Because of these types of legal issues the private schools are being bound to pay taxes for the government, sometimes it is so high that they are suffering for poor financial condition and fail to maintain the whole school process by following the legal policy 25% reservation. That's why they try to avoid the following policy.

Location of private schools

Another problem for private school to follow this policy is that the location of the private schools. Most of the private schools are located at urban and semi urban area. But the disadvantages and weaker sections are generally living in remote area. Because of this location there is always a wide communication gap among the parents and school authority. Sometimes parent does not know such kinds of reservation

policies is also existing in private schools. Therefore parents of such communities ignore the private schools because of remote location and communication and authority also does not bother about the advertising in admission for reservation.

Negative trends of weaker section

There is a wrong traditional trend among the disadvantaged people in admission of private schools. They think that private schools are not for their children. It is only for the children of rich people and the children of weaker section will not cop up with rich people children. Therefore, they think that private schools are not providing such kinds of facilities which govt. school provide freely. And the quality of education and demands of private schools are very poor than government schools. Because of that wrong concept parents are not interested to send their children in private schools in spite of having provided 25% reservation and free education by the many private schools.

Some Solution, suggestion and recommendation

Government financial help

I discuss earlier that because of lack of govt financial help the private schooling are not following 25% reservation policy. According to the RTE Act 2009 the Government must provide proper economic help to private school so that the authority can bear the expenditure of 25% admitted students of weaker section.

Reduce of reservation

As private schools are being run by the private authority with their own investment, the government can reduce the 25% burden into 15% reservation or consideration, in class 1 admission from weaker section. This reduce of reservation in private schools from 25% to 15% will help the school management not to incur too much expenditure. In turn, it will also reduce the burden on 75% parents which is in the form of increased school fees.

Centralized system in 25% reservation

Through RTE Act follow 25% reservation in class I admission from disadvantages section, the govt does not mention any proper and significant guidance in selection for admission. It create a hesitation how the private authority select children in which basis in 25% reservation. So the policy makers should mention a clear guideline or provide centralized reservation system in selection procedure in 25 % reservation seats of private schools. This will ensure equal opportunities among the disadvantage children to create educational integration.

Monitoring in maintenance of quality students

The school authority and the government can take the responsibility to maintain the quality education among 25% admitted students. The government could provide funds to private schools who would like to arrange some extra classes after school hours for the RTE children to bring them come at the same level of the regular children in the class. Schools can advise some programme where they can help the RTE children to reach at the level of the other children in the class.

Perpetuation of equality

It has been observed that in private schools the RTE children

are being discriminated and segregated by other children in the same class on the basis of a child's background. Students should be sanitized to respect children coming from all backgrounds. They should be taught to not discriminate, and treat everyone equally irrespective of their skills, social and economic background.

Medium of instruction

We can see that medium of instruction in private schools is English and this is a huge barrier for the RTE children to comprehend what is being taught in classes. The school could conduct extra English classes for these children so that they learn the language and can cope with the classes. The authority can also give priority of mother tongue for backwards students as medium of instruction in some specific cases.

Voucher system in making payment

As RTE act states that the government should bear whole expenditure of 25 % reserved students in private school, the authority can start a voucher system for making payment annually or some interval through the Government. Here, a government "voucher" system could be put in place that would work as follows: All 'below-poverty-line' students would receive a voucher to be used in due of fees at any designated government school or 'low-cost' private school of the parents' choosing. The institution would receive a fixed payment per voucher from the government, which would be set at a level that makes the schools financially viable. Since the parents could move with ease from one school to another, competition would ensure that schools are forced to maintain quality and standards. It is highly probable that the cost per voucher would be less than what the government would spend to run its own schools.

Promoting guidance programme

The government and the school authority can start a guidance programme by making a committee for informing poor and disadvantage people about the 25 % reservation policy in private schools. The government can also motivate these parents by informing the quality teaching learning in private schools. They can also be informed about equal and other facilities in private schools like the government one.

Both Government monitoring

To implement the RTE Act successfully in private schools both government should monitor with communicating each other. They should survey and report on whether all the private schools are implementing 25% reservation system for weaker pupils or they avoid it. If the private school are not following the government should make a report on reason, school authority's opinion and view for which they are ignoring the RTE Act. Finally both, the government in their co-operation must try to solve the arising problem.

Promoting local management committee

The local management committee can play the important role to make this implementation in private school with the help of government authority in the admission advertisement, selection procedure for 25 % reservation, structure of voucher system for payment etc. With the support of both governments, management committee can in spite school authority to follow this act effectively. The committee should support financial

help to school authority by cooperating with the both governments.

School awareness programme

The policy makers with the cooperation of government should arrange the school awareness programme about the implementation of RTE Act and its positive effects towards the quality education. The private school authority should be motivated by this type of awareness programme to implementation of 25% reservation in class 1 admission. They should be awarded about the aims of RTE Act is that it will not only improve the life quality of disadvantages students but also create a good and healthy social and education integration among all type of students.

More programme policy and revision

If possible, the government must revised the RTE Act and its facet of 25% reservation in private school in favor of authority and students as well. The Government can support more financial help, fair policy of supporting and other sound environment so, that private school hopefully follow the RTE Act and its 25% reservation facet most effectively.

Conclusion

The present study has analyzed the 25% reservation seats for disadvantaged and weaker sections of the society in private schools under the RTE Act. It studied the benefits, challenges, feasibility of the reservation and the views of the stakeholders, namely management representatives of private schools, teachers in private schools, and parents of children who admit their children in private schools under the 25% reservation policy.

Children who come for admission in private schools should be rightfully treated and given admission if they qualify. Malpractice and discrimination should be curbed. Teachers should be sensitive towards the RTE children and their needs i.e., individual attention, remedial help after classes and bilingual teaching. The teacher must also ensure and monitor peer interaction. The school and government should take steps towards sensitizing the teachers and other school staffs towards accepting and treating the RTE children equally as the non RTE children.

The study indicated that RTE children are not able to cope with their classmates in terms of academics. Evaluation system in CBSE schools is such that no child can be detained. This acts as a barrier in achieving the primary aim of the act which is education for all. Education is merely represented by the marks that a student obtains but not by the quality of it. The RTE children are not able to obtain good marks. They need help after school hours so that they can come up to the expected level. The lack of a proper foundation and medium of instruction prove to be a major problem for the RTE children to understand the lessons taught in class. To overcome this problem, the school and teachers could work together to provide the necessary help to these children to cover the gaps.

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