

Quality education, no-detention and rte act, 2009: some insights

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Abstract

In India, elementary education for all the children between the 06-14 years of age is a fundamental right under Article 21 of Indian Constitution. RTE Act 2009 is one of the most important documents that outlaid its structure in the light of Indian Constitution, Convention on Rights of the Child and National Curriculum Framework, 2005. This is the first Act that tried to capture an array of quality in education under its various sections and subsections. The present article highlights various sections of RTE Act, 2009 that specifies quality in education. It also highlights the some of the gaps noticed between planning and implementation that fails to ensure quality in the system.

Keywords: Quality Education, No Detention, RTE Act, 2009.

Introduction

Right to Education Act, 2009 came into criticism ever since it came into existence. People concerned in the field of education wanted quality through RTE Act 2009. However, sections 8(g) and 9(h) try to touch and define the quality in terms of physical facilities and section 16, 17, 29(2) designs the new child-centred promotional policies, healthy and non-threatening environment for children and pedagogical changes in such a way that they are conducive to children (Juneja, 2013) ^[1].

However, section 8(g), 9(h), 16, 17 and 29(2) try to bring quality into the system, yet it seems to fail in bringing concrete changes in practice. Indeed, screaming and serious concerns have been raised for doing harms into the society. Policy such as no-detention and admission to age appropriate classroom are blamed largely for doing the destruction in education. They are considered to be threatening for the future society. Policy in practice has developed lackadaisical attitude among parents, students and teachers have been raised emphatically by various people. Students are not studying as they know; they will get promotion irrespective of hard work (Thomas, 2012) ^[2]. Truancy among students has risen up due to no-detention (proceedings of CABE, 2012) ^[3]. Student's yearly promotion without sufficient learning, mostly affects students studying in government schools calls an emergency for strengthening social inequalities (PROBE, 1999) ^[4]. But there is a need to understand the root cause of the problem. Is this policy framed under RTE, 2009 is anti-social to be rejected out-rightly or problem lies somewhere else?

The term quality is very subjective and can mean different to different people, in education. However, it is understood the way it defines the society and plays its functional role for the same (Kumar and Sarangpani, 2004) ^[5]. In policy documents quality as an objective was coined in mid 90's for the first time in 1986 policy on education (Sarangpani, 2010). It was then, when non-formal modes of education were respected for providing the potential education to many children. On the ground that these institutions were able to deliver comparable quality education where children mastered MLLS (minimum level of learning) through the process of education. Major limitation of MLL as pointed by Kumar (1992) ^[7] was that it

equates education with the amount of information crammed by the child in a behaviouristic manner and reproduced in summative examinations. Therefore, there was a need to reconceptualise the education and the associated term 'quality.' NCF, 2005 is treated as one landmark change in conceptualising the education as a process to develop young minds, their body and spirit. In this process of education, the larger aim is to protect the child rights and facilitate the Indian constitution in transforming the society.

NCF, 2005, therefore, emphasized the importance of constructivism as pedagogic approach to education knowledge constructed actively by the learner was more important than rote learning. Formative evaluation was given undue importance over summative to treat evaluation as a process engraved within the educational process. The aim of it is not mere to end all but to give a new beginning based on feedback. Feedback gained through the formative assessment is treated as constructive feedback to develop further teaching-learning process. In this process the aim is to ensure holistic development of each child.

This individualised and constructive approach is appraised philosophically in various sections and subsections of RTE Act 2009. RTE when was relooked in the light of quality education that it facilitates, it was observed that it's all provisions were framed in the light of Article 21 of Indian Constitution, Convention of Child Rights and NCF, 2005. They all define education as a continuous process responsible for the overall development of each individual in a fear free environment that too in an individualized mode. For this purpose RTE Act 2009 has defined both quality standards in education and quality of education in its section 8(g), 9(h), 16, 17 and 29(2).

Section 8(g) and 9(h) specifies standards and norms for physical facilities that each school should maintain to serve quality education. Similarly, section 16, 17 and 29(2) defines new promotion and retention rules, establishes congenial and non-threatening environment; and defines various subsections on pedagogical and assessment outlook to strengthen quality education. Though these features of RTE Act cover the spectrum to strengthen quality education, but in contrary its practical approach does not support it. There are various gaps

that have been raised and are often criticised for not able to provide quality in education. Some the criticism raised in this regard are as follows:

1. Six percentage of GDP if allocated to fund Universalization of school education in government run schools only the funds will not be substantial (Jain and Dholakia, 2009) ^[8].
2. Study shows that only 54% teachers were recruited out of the target laid down for vacant positions under SSA in the year 2013 (Soni, 2013) ^[9].

In the defined circumstances with reference to RTE Act 2009 in practice; no-detention as part of section 16 of RTE Act is criticised for doing more harms. Lack of qualified and permanent teachers, large teacher-pupil ratio and insufficient financial support does not allow congenial environment for quality education to happen. The scarce conditions fails to facilitate quality of learning and in the absence of sufficient learning; automatic yearly promotion, a prominent feature of section 16 of RTE Act 2009, raises serious concerns for the learners who are getting promoted without sufficient learning.

No-detention aims to protect the learners from the frustration that occurs due to failure. It is also viewed as a potential way to reduce dropout that occurs due to failure. However, in the absence of learning, neither of its aims seems to be a target that can be achieved. Children experience daily failure and frustration when they find themselves incompetent in higher grades (Tomchin and Impara, 1992 ^[10]; Range *et.al.*, 2012 ^[11]; Pouliot, 1999) ^[12]. As per PROBE Report, children dropout because of poor learning that takes place in schools (Probe 1999) ^[4]. Education is viewed as a means to gain upward mobility by every parent. When parent finds the system is not helping their children they prefer to take their children out of the system (Probe, 1999) ^[4].

No-detention (stated in section 16) under RTE Act was viewed in the light of its various sections and sub sections like 8(g), 9(h), 17 and 29(2). They all are however, stated in different sections but in the RTE Act they all together give a deeper meaning to the term quality in education (Juneja, 2013) ^[1]. When there is learning, there is no need for grade to grade promotion and hence its an automatic implementation of no-detention. But the piecemeal approach given to the Act where the system could not facilitate the quality learning at the implementation level, it disturbed the whole approach of the Act. No-detention now became a provision where students are promoted irrespective of learning and hence gaining criticism and demanding a review.

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