



Teachers' Perception of Problems in implementing RTE Act in Schools of Kerala

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Abstract

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Government of India enacted RTE Act in 2009 with a fresh hope to achieve quality elementary education which brought many qualitative and quantitative changes in the school education. This study tries to identify various problems in implementing RTE Act in schools of Kerala as perceived by Teachers and compile their suggestions for improvement. The study was conducted on a state wide sample of 505 elementary school teachers and data was collected using a rating scale on expected problems. The study revealed that problems related to Infrastructure are the most occurring one. The suggestions include better toilet facilities and furniture; appointment of teachers; sufficient number of working days; sufficient fund etc.

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In India, elementary education has been given high priority by both the Central and State governments with a number of programmes to ensure the participation of all children to have quality education. To attract the students, the schools made changes in its infrastructure, human resources, and its various practices. With the implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009 the education of the child within the age group 6-14 became his/her Right and their education is the duty of parents, schools, governments, and community. Hence a mass movement of children from home to school has happened and this is seen in the higher enrolment of students in the year, 2011. The data shows that the value for school enrollment in primary schools of India is 112.60 in 2011 and it was 78.24 in the year, 1971.

This Act is a turning point in the education of children belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, girls, disabled or financially very poor because the Act guarantees every Indian child free and compulsory education without any discrimination. Singh and Dev (2015), have opined that there remained an unfinished agenda of Universal education, particularly at the upper primary stage. The number of children, especially from the disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, who dropped out of school before completing upper primary education, has remained high. So what are the challenges behind such situations is to be studied. The concern is not only on the quantity, but on the quality also. Majority of academics still worry about the quality of learning in the case of children who completed the elementary education.

Right to Education Act, 2009

This is an Act passed in our Parliament on 4th August 2009. The Act ensures free and compulsory elementary education to every child of the age 6-14 years, in a neighborhood school. The Act came into force on 1 April 2010. The government is committed to ensure elementary education of all children through its flagship programme, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been launched in continuation of DPEP and the scheme is efficient in increasing quality of education. It focuses on decentralized and participatory planning. It aims at bridging social, regional and gender gaps with the active participation of the community in the management of schools, a total retention of all children in schools or



enters through innovative and alternative strategies and providing them education of satisfactory quality that is relevant to life so as to achieve the goal of quality elementary education by 2010. The focus of RTE is on Pupil Teacher Ratio, infrastructural facilities, existing curriculum, inclusive aspects, evaluation, School Management Committees, role of community, and quality aspects.

Though efforts to provide free and compulsory education are being made, in reality, these are not accessible everywhere due to a large number of issues and challenges in its implementation. There are schools with excellent human and physical resources, and some schools which are catering to the masses but cannot afford quality school education. Another category of schools with good physical resources including building, library, required infrastructure, and curriculum, adapted to the community requirement, but the teachers are not equipped with the required skills, competencies and the attitudes to handle the children for developing them as responsible future generations. One of the major challenges is to sensitize people about this Act especially the beneficiaries. Bairagya and Bairagya (2011) criticized RTE Act on the ground of lack of basic infrastructural facilities, appointment of teachers based on political not by qualification, aim of private schools how to earn money, and shortage of qualified teachers.

Educational development of Kerala

Educational development of Kerala is considered as a good model to the nation. Kerala state has witnessed tremendous changes and developments in the field of education before and after its formation in 1956. Kerala is the most literate state in India. In the year 1961 the literacy rate was 55.08%. In 2001, the literacy rate increased to 90.92%. Since the introduction of New economic policy, the educational sector in Kerala is also witnessed some new trends. Government efforts for educational expansion in Kerala for the last two decades have transformed educational sector completely. Kerala's remarkable record in the field of literacy and schooling facilities was the outcome of a joint initiative by the government and society for the last two decades. In the development of elementary education, Kerala is in the top position. But the private initiative in education resulted in budding of private schools in the unaided sector. This becomes one of the challenges in the field of education. Quality is the casualty here.

For effective teaching learning to take place, the Act specifies the teacher student ratio of 1:30 at primary level and 1:35 at the upper primary level. Likewise the primary school must function for 200 days and upper primary school to function for 220 days. The Lida Jacob Commission appointed by the State Government to recommend implementation of the RTE Act in the state, has suggested an increase in working days for classes VI to VIII and reduction in holidays.

Mehta and Chugh (2015) reported that researches indicate that there has been improvement in all physical facilities at both primary and upper primary levels during 2006-07 and 2009-10. But in many cases the information is not available on whether the facilities are satisfactory or not. References showed that a number of problems are there in schools while implementing RTE Act. This paper is on the perception of teachers about the problems while implementing Right to Education Act in schools of Kerala.

Objectives

1. To find out the problems of different areas in implementing RTE Act in schools
2. To identify suggestions proposed by teachers to implement RTE Act in schools

Method

Participants

The present study was conducted on elementary school teachers. A state wide sample of 505 elementary school teachers was randomly selected to conduct the study.

Instruments

Data was collected from the participants with a Rating scale- ranking. The items of the tool were prepared based on the eight chapters of the Act which describes the role and responsibilities of stakeholders in the education of child and norms and standards of schools. The nine problem areas were selected and included in the tool. The areas are, Infrastructure, Teachers, Curriculum, Duties of government, Local government, Right of child, Fund, SMC, and Quality Education. Besides that, problems under each major area were also listed.

The rating scale was distributed among teachers and was asked to rank major problem areas according to their occurrence in schools and the same procedure to the problems under each major problem area. Scoring was done based on the ranks given by the participants to each major problem area and problems under each major area. Teachers were asked to give their suggestions to improve the system in the space provided under each category.

Results and Discussion

Analysis was done based on the rank order of problems given by participants. Number of teachers who ranked each problem in the order of first to ninth rank is given as Table 1

Table 1

Rank order given by Teachers to major problems in schools

Sl. No.	Problem areas	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
1	Infrastructure	127	146	44	81	30	31	12	17	5
2	Teachers	166	88	78	37	27	12	25	17	19
3	Duties of Government	18	32	44	79	43	84	47	43	51
4	Duties of Local Government	15	13	38	44	80	46	100	58	36
5	Curriculum	48	57	73	76	93	31	34	16	16
6	Right of child	22	21	37	38	46	59	64	107	39
7	Fund	30	69	75	48	58	68	45	35	43
8	SMC	11	22	30	38	56	63	63	34	114
9	Quality Education	52	90	69	60	27	40	29	56	27

Table 1 shows the rank order given by teachers to problems of schools while implementing RTE Act. The first rank is given to problems in the area, Teachers by 166 participants out of 505. Second problem is Infrastructure which is ranked by 146 participants, and the third by 75 participants to the problem, Fund. The other problems are in the order of duties of government, curriculum, SMC, local government, right of child, and quality education.

Rank indices of problems in schools while implementing RTE Act.

Rank index to major problems will give a clear picture of most occurring problem and the corresponding problems of schools while implementing RTE Act. It is given in table 2.

Table 2

Rank indices to problems given by teachers while implementing RTE Act

Sl.No.	Problem Areas	Rank indices
1	Infrastructure	6.839
2	Teachers	6.489
3	Curriculum	5.136
4	Quality Education	5.07
5	Fund	4.84
6	Duties of government	4.017
7	Local government	3.574
8	Right of child	3.493
9	SMC	3.2

Table 2 presents the problem areas according to their relative ranking by the respondents, teachers. According to the participants, the Infrastructure was the first problem with the highest rank index 6.839. The second problem was the area teachers with a rank index of 6.489. Their least problem area was school management committee, SMC with a rank index of 3.2. Thus the order of problems from most occurring to least occurring in schools reported by teachers are infrastructure, teachers, curriculum, quality education, fund, government, local government, right of child and SMC respectively.

The most occurring problem area identified by teachers was 'infrastructure'. This problem area is studied in detail. There are 13 problems included in infrastructure. The rank indices given to these problems by teachers are shown in table 3.

Table 3

Rank indices of problems in the area infrastructure given by Teachers

Sl.No.	Infrastructure	Rank index
1	Lack of toilets for girls in the ratio 1:20	9.17
2	Lack of toilets for boys in the ratio 1:30	8.6
3	Pathetic state of school building	7.35
4	Lack of teaching-learning materials in the classroom	7.26
5	Non availability of books, magazines, and newspapers in the library	7.15
6	Lack of furnitures required	7.08
7	Lack of laboratory	6.84
8	Lack of play ground	6.18
9	Non-availability of pure water	5.88
10	Lack of classrooms in size	5.57
11	Lack of equipments for athletic needs/sports	5.48
12	Lack of spacious and cleanly kitchen	5.37
13	Lack of a compound wall	4.51

Table 3 shows that the most occurring problem under infrastructure was the problems of toilet facilities for girls with the highest rank index 9.17 and their second rank was to the toilet facilities to boys with the rank index of 8.6. The pathetic state of school building was their third problem under infrastructure and the rank index was 7.35. The least occurring problem is lack of compound wall with a rank index of 4.51.

The major problem area while implementing RTE Act in schools according to teachers was infrastructure. In this area infrastructure, the lack of toilet facilities for girls was the most occurring problem and the second most problem was the toilet facilities for boys. Their least occurring problem under infrastructure was lack of a compound wall. Even the infrastructure is improved a lot in schools, these facilities as per the number of students is not satisfactory.

Suggestions proposed by Teachers - Suggestions proposed by teachers to implement RTE Act in schools in all its aspects are as follows.

- Schools should provide more, and clean toilet facilities, furniture for teachers, computers for students, more classrooms, and safety of classrooms.
- Take steps to change the HMs from class charge and in place appoint teachers, separate teachers for physical training, Training in time, Aptitude test for teachers, and appointment of special teachers in schools.
- Provide enough number of text books in time
- Role of local govt. is to be ensured in development of school
- Consideration to students from backward community, ensure child centredness in curriculum framing, reduce the load of curriculum in lower classes, give ample time to complete the content
- Remove the delay in distribution of sufficient grant in time, discrimination in distribution of grant between govt. and aided schools
- SMC to be strong in its activities, enhance parents' role in school, and timely class PTA and SRGs.

Conclusion

With the joint effort of government, schools and community, the status of elementary schools have improved a lot. Some of the teachers opined that their schools with no problems in some of the aspects included in the tool. From this it is found that schools are with different problems. In the present study teachers ranked first infrastructure as the major problem of schools and the toilet facilities for girls and boys are not up to the norms in most of the schools. Even after five years of implementing RTE Act, the elementary schools have to go more to achieve the aim of access, and quality education to all.

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