EVALUATION of INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES and ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS of PRIVATE SCHOOLS as per RTE ACT-2009, in KARNATAKA

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GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

JANUARY 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a study of Infrastructure Facilities and Compliance to Eligibility Conditions of the RTE Act, 2009 by private, unaided, non-minority schools of Karnataka State with special reference to section 12(1)(c) and other school specific sections. There are 38 sections in the Act along with 2 schedules on complements of school quality. 25 of the 38 sections are directly related to the school level implementation. Other sections are for LSG, GoK, GoI duties.

Right to Education, 2009, has a history of over 200 years as a public policy agenda beginning with the French Revolution. Earliest initiatives began in India at Baroda State in 1908 and in old Mysore State in 1914. Karnataka State adopted the Act in 2010 and rolled out the rules in 2012.

Objectives of the study are specified by the KEA/DoE in its ToR. Study of selection process, with reference to (a) transparency, changing admission policies and procedures, effectiveness in reaching the disadvantaged sections of society as stipulated in sections 2 and 3; (b) learning environment in schools and learning attainments of children admitted under 12(1)(c); (c) discriminatory practices (if any) in schools and the hidden/subtle ways of such discrimination; (d) compliance to eligibility conditions of quality elementary education with specific references to physical and academic infrastructure facilities; (e) capturing the perceptions of primary stakeholders – parents, students and others in the school system – Head Teachers, Teachers; (f) examining the Monitoring and Supervision (M and S) practices at school and by the departmental officers; (g) examining redressal mechanisms for grievances (if any); and (h) providing a feedback and suggestions for improving the implementation status in conformity with the letter and spirit of the RTE Act in future constitute the objectives of the study.

Triangulation is the method adopted. Documentary analysis of secondary data from school and the DoE; Descriptive Survey of schools and stakeholders that includes Observation techniques, Validation of observations of Field Investigators by the Field Supervisors, IDI of HTs, teachers, parents, students, educational officers; Case Studies of ‘good’ and ‘other’ (not so good) schools are the specific methods.

Stratified Random Sampling is used for selection of sample schools and stakeholders, in consultation with KEA. Type of schools (LPS/HPS/HS), region, districts/division wise

representation is ensured. Number of schools is same for all 34 districts. 360 schools at 15 schools per district, 754 parents, 5,453 students and 63 educational officers constitute the sample.

Analysis of data is both qualitative and quantitative. Descriptive Statistics, deviation analysis, correlation of attainments with attendance, Levene's 't' test analysis of differences in attainments across RTE and non-RTE children (control group) across divisions and the State, analysis of perceptions of primary stakeholders are the variety of analyses of empirical data. Demand estimation using secondary data has been done.

Results are classified under the following sections: (I)(a) RTE Enrolments – secondary data analysis of State data and Retention; (b) Enrolments in the Study; (c) Learning Attainments of RTE and non-RTE children; (II) Infrastructure physical and academic; (III) Learning Environment, (IV) Social Profile; (V) Issues of Discrimination; (VI) Problems in RTE Implementation; (VII) Case Study Results, (VIII) Recommendations – Specific and Long-term; (IX) Final Observations.

RTE admissions began on a low key during the three years 2012-13 to 2014-15, initial period. During 2012-13 to 2019-20, there have been marginal increases. For every 10 seats available, demand ratio has been 4.2, 6.9, 8.5, 9.0, 8.5, 8.5 and 7.6 during 2012-13 to 2018-19. Private, unaided schools are also growing every year, adding to the pool of available seats under RTE 12(1) (c). Number of invalid applications reduced over the years even with digital mode after 2015-16. Transitions from year to year are complete; there are no drop-outs, full retention. Increases in demand are observed and are steady in 12 out of 34 educational districts of the State the range being 0.04 to 1.12 per cent in 09 districts – Yadgir, Mysuru, Shimoga, Chikkodi, Bellary, Dharwad, Kodagu, Davangere, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. It is high only in Bengaluru City (2 districts) at 18.40 per cent, during the reference period. One per cent increase means nearly 500 seats. Enrolments under RTE 12 (1) (c) have implications for reimbursements of unit costs by the government.

Demand for RTE seats is observed to be a function of Computer Education, English medium instruction, infrastructure facilities – Science laboratory, English communication milieu which are perceived to guarantee bright life-chances.

Demand across the divisions is highest in Kalburgi division, average for 4 years from 2015-16 to 2018-19 being 7828 students. It is followed by Bengaluru division at 7156

students. It is low in Belagavi and Mysuru divisions. The DoE/GoK strictly enforced the 'neighbourhood' school policy of RTE opportunities in 2019-20, which implies eligibility for admission only if there is no government sector school within 1 kilometer radius of parents/homes. Demand fell drastically by 55 per cent at the State level.

If this new rule had been conceived and enforced from 2012-13, Government would have saved substantive volume of funds on reimbursement to private schools.

There is an alternative view that the neighbourhood school policy discriminates against parents with or without a government sector school in their neighbourhood. It needs a legislative review.

A Learning Attainment Test of 4th standard level used by the DoE was administered on 1440 RTE and 720 non-RTE children with equal proportion of boys and girls. It was a composite test on Kannada, English, EVS and Mathematics. Results of analyses reveal that in regard to overall performance on all 4 subjects, average marks is 84.21 per cent for RTE students while it is 86.51 per cent for non-RTE students. Differences are insignificant. Levene's 't' test analysis showed that differences across 4 divisions are also not significant. Kalburgi division students have performed better than students of other divisions. Correlation values across attainments and attendance percentages of both RTE and non-RTE students are positive and significant everywhere. Values are marginally higher for non-RTE than RTE students.

RTE students are doing well in learning attainments in private unaided schools.

Violations of the RTE Act are observed in varying degrees across the State by marginally significant proportions of schools. These violations are in regard to recognition (11 per cent not recognized), schools in rented buildings (31 per cent), no compound (35 per cent), no CCTV (22 per cent). Schools are comfortable with 8 out of 9 mandated facilities of RTE Act and Rules. They are toilets for boys, for girls, drinking water, playground, ramps with railing and landing space, library, electricity, classrooms. Compound wall is the 9th facility.

Computer Laboratory (CL) is there in 90 per cent schools. Computer Education (CE) begins from I standard in 60 per cent schools and from III standard in 75 per cent schools, from V standard in 85 percent schools. Even in Kalburgi division, a backward region, CL is there in 78 per cent schools. In contrast, CE begins at 6th standard in Government schools

while only 40 per cent Higher Primary Schools have a CL. 71 per cent schools in the State sample have a dedicated science laboratory. Still, 63 per cent schools have aids/equipments which are adequate to conduct 30 per cent of experiments/activities prescribed in the syllabus by DSERT, for I to VIII standards. 99 per cent schools possess Teaching Learning Materials (TLM). 66per cent schools take students on project work, outside the school.

Sports and Games facilities are quite good in sample schools.

Learning environment is 'free', 'open' and 'friendly' in the schools. 95 per cent students report that teachers are friendly with them. 98 per cent students 'clear' their doubts and get satisfactory answers (98 per cent). There is no ragging/teasing/taunting/bullying/ molestation of students [as per self-report by 94 per cent]. All subjects are **'easy'** for 70 per cent students. Difficult subjects are English (16%), Mathematics (13%) and Computer Science (7%).

RTE students learn CE with non-RTE students (95%), learn school subjects (92%), surf advanced information (80%), and play games (72%).

RTE students conduct experiments in science laboratory (94%), use school library and reading room (82%), do project work (90%). All children participate in sports/games/literary/ cultural activities. 43 per cent have won prizes. 18 per cent have participated in inter-school competitions.

By and large, learning environment is 'satisfactory'. Students are 'very happy' (68%) and 'happy' (30%) to study in these schools. In spite of a 'good' learning environment, 72 per cent RTE students go for 'private tuitions'.

Teachers perceive RTE children to be smart (93%), enthusiastic (97%), disciplined (98%), and punctual in homework (95%). Only 27 per cent teachers feel that RTE students are 'slow learners'.

An analysis of education and occupation of fathers and mothers of students reveals that RTE 12(1)(c) seats have gone to the **'deserving poor'**. 48 per cent children are girls. There are 27 per cent SC/ST and 73 per cent OBCs in the sample. Selections are by the SSA/DoE/GoK as per norms – a case of perfectly 'Good Governance' of RTE 12 (1) (c) in letter and spirit.

There is hidden, subtle discrimination against RTE children in a small minority of schools, in several areas of school life, exceptions being sports/games, literary/cultural activities and monitor system. Instances of discrimination are: separate section or seating arrangements (5.6%, 20 schools), separate batches to conduct science experiments (4.7% schools), CE in separate groups (7.2% schools), separate library timings (8.05% schools), separate timings at reading room (9.2% schools), separate toilets (16.7% schools) and separate drinking water facility (17.8% schools). Surprising fact is that parents/students have no complaints about these acts of discrimination. Individual schools are not important. Problem needs to be addressed at systematic level beginning with GPs/Blocks/districts.

Aggressive strategies such as RTE enrolment campaigns and publicity measures by the Government are quite wanting. Parents relied on neighbours, friends and relatives for knowing about RTE 12 (1) (c) opportunities. Remote rural/tribal areas need special attention. Parents find it difficult to adjust to digital methods of application. Parents (24%) spend money at Cyber Café for this purpose (they are poor). Donations are collected in 16 per cent schools. Attention to slow learners is lacking. Methods like 'Mastery Learning' and 'Time-on-Task' are not practised in schools (advocated by the DSERT). Health camps are not systematically organized. Documentation for RTE applications (Aadhar Card, Income Certificate, Caste Certificate, Age-proof etc.) is unsystematic and variegated across the State. In a few schools, the year's syllabus is not completed in time. There is a significant concern in regard to reimbursements. 35 per cent schools do not maintain a separate Bank Account for RTE.

Case studies of good and other schools contrast with each other. 'Pooled' performance of 136 sub-variables of RTE performance is studied using 09 'good' schools and 05 'other' schools. Performance ranges from 68.44 per cent to 84.71 per cent. A positive response on each sub-variable gets 1 score. Good schools are 'good' in Social profile (95.83%), non-discrimination (93.46%), Learning Environment (90.37%), management concerns (86.11%), and Infrastructure (78.59%). They are not so good in regard to grant of 25 per cent seats (66.67% score). 'Other' schools do not do well on any of the variables except social profile where Government/DoE intervention is there.

Strictness in enforcement of RTE/departmental rules in regard to recognition of schools, prevention of donations/fees, facilitation of digital support to parents for filling/filing applications, simplification of documentation practices, serious attention in M & S against

discrimination of RTE students, facilitation of learning to RTE students through supply of accessories for learning – instruments box, drawing books, craft materials, crayon boxes, Atlas etc., (even for Government sector school children), counseling programmes to RTE school heads and teachers are the specific recommendations.

Extension of scope of RTE Act, 2009 to pre-primary and secondary stages of schooling, 4 to 16 years; ensuring D.Ed./B.Ed (elementary education) among teachers of private, unaided schools (63 per cent teachers do not have it; they have B.Ed., which is fit for secondary schools); enforcement of Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), a test mandated for all teachers, every 5 years by GoI/GoK; organization of short-cycle/sandwich training courses to Teachers of private/unaided schools by the DSERT/DIETs on payment basis; attaching kindergartens with 1 to 8 standard schools (discouraging stand-alone kindergarten schools) are the long-term recommendations. Finally, improve all government schools to such heights/levels that parents do not feel the need for RTE 12 (1) (c) admissions in private schools. For this purpose, provide Computer Labs to all government schools, begin CE from 3rd standard, improve teaching of English as 'a language' of study and communication, provide self-sufficient, norms-based science laboratories, provide graduate teachers to elementary stage (94 per cent of private school teachers are graduates/post-graduates), link teachers' pay of government schools to their qualifications and not the stage at which they teach.

Implementation of the RTE Act satisfies WHO/ILO/UNESCO parameters of a development project. They are Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Impact. The fifth and final parameter – Sustainability is under stress. Let RTE 12(1)(c) section, not any of the other sections, be a stop gap/interim arrangement till all public (government) schools (rural/tribal/urban) reach highest standards of quality, equity, efficiency and excellence. Government schools are excellent in regard to all the 09 RTE mandated facilities; better than private schools in certain respects; except CL & CE (SDG goal 4 expectation).

As of now, 'gross violation' of RTE Act by private unaided schools is in regard to section 13 – no capitation fees (a small minority of schools), teachers eligibility conditions (section 23), mother tongue as medium of instruction (section 29) and discriminatory practices. They need redressal through social action.