

Implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009): A Case Study of Polba Gram Panchayat, West Bengal

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Abstract

The vision of the Indian New Education Policy (2020) is to provide greater access, equity, excellence, inclusion, and affordability of children to help India emerge as a knowledge superpower. In the present context, a case study has been conducted at the Polba Gram Panchayat (GP) of Hooghly District of West Bengal to study the status of implementation of the Right to Education (RTE), Act, 2009. The qualitative data are collected and analyzed from 30 villages of the said GP under 13 Mouzas having 26 habitations. According to the Census Report, 2011, the population in the Polba Panchayat is found 20,084, of which males comprise 10,150 and females 9,934. The data is collected from Panchayat office records on RTE implementation strategies and Focus Group Discussions are conducted to collect analytical data for the study. It is concluded that most of the village people are living with the hope that one day their dream of securing holistic education for all children - irrespective of their class, color, or creed - will be fulfilled. This is in fact the very essence of Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. However, there is a conclusive evidence from the study to prove that the hiatus between what is laid down by law and the ground realities is alarmingly colossal. Regarding the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009 the ideal RTE Act at the grass-root level has resulted in the path-breaking Act becoming unfortunately much less effective in some places than what it was intended to be.

Keywords: RTE Act, Article 21A of the Constitution, Gram Panchayat, FGD.

Introduction

National Education Policy-2020¹ is a landmark document and a guiding source to bring reformative changes in the overall Indian education system. It presents the vision for greater inclusion, equity, quality, affordability and accountability of children to help India emerges as the knowledge superpower in the near future. The policy is a revolutionary step of the Govt. of India to bring transformational change in the entire education sector through advancements in pedagogies, knowledge creation, innovative, delivery mechanisms, and integrated management of the overall evaluation system. This policy replaces the 34-year-old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986². In fact, the need for policy change was felt in the report of the Kothari Commission, (1964)³. A 17-member Education Commission was constituted to draft a *National Policy on Education* under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari. Before the introduction of the present *National Education Policy (NEP), 2020*, earlier, the Parliament had passed the first education policy in 1968⁴, followed by the NPE, 1986⁵, and its *Programme of Action (PoA)*, 1992⁶.

After a period of 34 years, in 2020, the most comprehensive, structured, and visionary policy document was drafted under the Chairmanship of noted scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan to meet the contemporary and futuristic needs of the large population of Indian youth. The Task Force has been formed in 2021⁷ to devise the roadmap for phased implementation of the policy. They had devised a comprehensive roadmap for implementation of NEP-2020 after a multiple rounds of consultations with various stakeholders including teachers, heads of the institutions, scholars, Deans, Vice-chancellors of the Universities, and also eminent experts from various prestigious organizations. A document entitled, “*NEP-2020 Implementation Plan: Strategic Action Plan and Goals*”⁸ has been developed on eight significant components of the policy (2020), namely, (i) Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education; (ii) Equity and Inclusion; (iii) Motivated, Energized and Capable Faculty; (iv) Technology Use and Integration; (v) Global Outreach of Higher Education; (vi) Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems; Languages, Culture and Values; (vii) Research, Innovation, and Rankings; and (viii) The Integrated Higher Education System.

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The whole education process in India is now at the crossroads. On one hand, economically India is aspiring to reach the target of the top five countries of the world. On the other, the reality is that a large segment of our population still exists below the poverty line and they are mostly illiterate too. India is often under the observation of development experts, NGOs, or academic institutions focusing on the welfare economy and social justice due to the existence of adverse conditions for the child population. In fact, we, as a nation, have not been able to uphold the most basic of the child's rights - the 'right to Life' (RTL)⁹. As an impact of RTL, two other important rights, viz., *right to food* (RTF) and *right to education* (RTE) have become the most significant areas of concern in our country for all the governmental and non-governmental bodies, viz., Governments at the Central, State and Local bodies, and NGOs.

Even after 76 years of Independence, still, we are grappling with serious challenges related to both issues. Our focus in the present study is on the status of the "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RCFCE), and Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009"¹⁰. The Field Extension Programmes of the 'Centre for Child and the Law' (CCL) at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) is playing a very significant role in creating awareness about the RTE Act and monitoring its realistic implementation at the ground level. It has also been taking necessary steps in close collaboration with the State governments and civil society groups to make RTE a reality. This is being done through advocacy works by strengthening the capabilities of people and institutions. The Government of India is providing supports, grants, and aids in implementing the NEP 2020, using the Act as an instrument to realize the *Basic Rights of Children* (BRC). The overarching principle is to bring the primary stakeholders through a bottom-up process and thereby empower communities to build a strong social movement for equitable quality education on the basic 'principle of social justice and equity'.

Scope of the Study

The CCL has been established as a specialized multi-disciplinary Research Centre of NLSIU on April 1996. The Centre integrates research, direct field actions, teaching on child rights law, and its practices, and socio-legal strategies as tools for transformative social change in order to enable children to live with dignity. It aims to ensure social justice, human rights, and quality of life for all children in the Indian context, with a special focus on equitable quality education, care, protection, and justice especially for the marginalized and excluded children.

In the present study one Gram Panchayat (GP) has been identified for an in-depth case study. It includes one of the Gram Panchayats (GPs), named *Polba* GP in Hooghly District of West Bengal State which is also pursuing an implementation plan of NEP, 2020 under the Field Extension Programme of the Govt. of WB. The identified GP is located 45 KMs away from Kolkata off the Kolkata-Delhi National Highway, and about 12 KMs west from the Bandel Jn. Railway station. The said GP, as part of Local Self-Government is the basic unit of administration of a village. The state of West-Bengal is one of the pioneering states in introducing the Panchayati Raj Institution as a part of larger democratic decentralization process. In the present *Polba* GP where the Field-Extension Programme has been implemented in 30 villages under 13 Mouzas having 26 habitations. Out of these 26 habitations, 9 are revenue villages and the remaining 17 habitations are attached to the main revenue villages. According to the Census Report, 2011, the population in the *Polba* Panchayat is 20,084, of which males comprise 10,150 and females 9,934.

The Context of the Study

In 1992, the Supreme Court of India has declared the *right to education* should be a fundamental right in the case of *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka*¹¹. It is observed that the 'Right to Life' is the compendious expression of all those rights that the courts must enforce because they are basic to the dignified enjoyment of life. The 'Right to Education' flows directly from the *Right to Life*. The Right to Life under Article 21 and the dignity of an individual cannot be assured unless it is accompanied by the Right to Education. The State Government is under an obligation to make an endeavor to provide the educational facilities at all levels to

its citizens. This was again reiterated by the Supreme Court in 1993, in the case of J.P. Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh¹².

It is significant that the Parliament as a result, enacted the Eighty-Sixth Amendment of the Constitution (2002), to make education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group 6 to 14 years. It was undoubtedly a compromise on the effectiveness of education since children from birth to 6 years and 15 to 18 years stood excluded. The Right remained on paper for eight years owing to the delay in drafting central legislation that would lay down the practical framework for its implementation.

After a delay in operationalizing the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002, the Central Government finally introduced the 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education' (Right to Education) bill in the Rajya Sabha on 15th December 2008, and it was passed by both the houses of Parliament and became a law after the kind assent of the Hon'ble President. The law came into effect all over the country, except in the state of Jammu and Kashmir on 1st April 2010. The Act received huge acclaim, and experts said it may change the overall education standard of India. Today, after crossing twelve years of its implementation, it remains to be seen whether the Act has been implemented well enough to make a significant impact in the lives of children.

According to NEP 2020, the Free and Compulsory Education Act should be introduced from 3 years to 18 years.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To develop an in-depth qualitative case study to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009 in the jurisdiction of Polba Gram Panchayat of Hooghly District in rural WB;
- ii. To understand the discrepancies between what is laid down by the Act and its actual implementation in the GP under study;
- iii. To create awareness about the implementation of 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009', amongst the people of 26 villages in the jurisdiction of Polba Panchayat of Hooghly District in rural WB;
- iv. To make some recommendations to the State for the effective implementation of the RTE Act (2009) on the basis of Focus Group Discussions (FGO);
- v. To study the status of primary education before and after the implementation of the RTE Act, 2020.

Methodology of the Study

The methodology of the study comprises two stages:

The quantitative part of the Study has been conducted to obtain some official secondary demographic data regarding the situation at the grass root level, collected from the *Polba Panchayat* Office records, and also by way of visiting the schools in the Panchayat to get a first-hand view of the happenings. A structured questionnaire was prepared based on the criteria of the Act (2009) and the status of each provision was crosschecked accordingly.

The qualitative data was also collected through the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to validate findings from the quantitative study and got feedback in greater detail about the implementation of NEP-2020. Four Focus Group discussions were organized (with Children, Parents, Members of Panchayat and the School

Development Monitoring Committee (SDMC) having a total of 20 participants on average in each of the groups.

Data Collection

The related data were collected in two phases. Firstly the researcher made contact with the Secretary to the *Polba* GP and collected necessary data from his office records regarding the implementation of the RTE Act in the *Panchayat*. Secondly, four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized to have the idea of opinions of different stakeholders, viz., students, parents, community, and SDMC members.

There were 15 Primary schools in the *Panchayat*; along with one Upper Primary (UPS), one Secondary School, four Higher Secondary Schools (HS), and a degree college. There were 2008 children in the total age group of 0 to 6 years, of which 1052 were Boys and 956 were girls respectively. The total number of children in the school-going age group of 6 to 14 years were found 1902 of which 873 were boys and the rest 1029 were girls. There were 30 *Anganwadi* canters (Boys 769, Girls 730) in the GP and one Primary Health Centre. As per section 9 of the RTE Act, the GP is found responsible for implementing the RTE Act in the territory within its jurisdiction.

Students attendance above 14-18 years is about 54%. Unfortunately, there was no systematic preservation of data of students from 15 to 18 years. Similarly, proper documentation was not made for 3-5 years children.

Demographic Data of the Polba GP

The table indicates that on an average the male and female populations are found almost the same, but in eight villages males are found more than females. Almost 10% of the children belong to below 6 years, of which boys were 5.24 % and girls found 4.76 %. The maximum illiteracy rate was found 22.34% among females in *Soa* village lowest was 10.38 % among females of in *Jatapur* village.

Name	No HH	TOT P	TOT M	TOT F	P_06	M_06	F_06	P_SC	M_SC	F_SC	P_ST	M_ST	F_ST	P_Lit	M_Lit	F_Lit	P_II	M_II	F_II
Paunan	1,194	5,003	2534 (50.65%)	2469 (49.35%)	530 (10.59%)	257 (5.14%)	273 (5.46%)	1839 (36.76%)	935 (18.69%)	904 (18.07%)	922 (18.43%)	450 (8.99%)	472 (9.43%)	3233 (64.62%)	1835 (36.68%)	1398 (27.94%)	1770 (35.38%)	699 (13.97%)	1071 (21.41%)
Polba	1,596	6,626	3333 (50.3%)	3293 (49.7%)	628 (9.48%)	339 (5.12%)	289 (4.36%)	2199 (33.19%)	1108 (16.72%)	1091 (16.47%)	1101 (16.62%)	519 (7.83%)	582 (8.78%)	4643 (70.07%)	2516 (37.97%)	2127 (32.1%)	1983 (29.93%)	817 (12.33%)	1166 (17.6%)
Sangrampur	284	1,289	670 (51.98%)	619 (48.02%)	119 (9.23%)	70 (5.43%)	49 (3.8%)	301 (23.35%)	154 (11.95%)		320 (24.83%)	162 (12.57%)	158 (12.26%)	849 (65.87%)	483 (37.47%)	366 (28.39%)	440 (34.13%)	187 (14.51%)	253 (19.63%)
Kusundipara	223	901	468 (51.94%)	433 (48.06%)	83 (9.21%)	44 (4.88%)	39 (4.33%)	386 (42.84%)	202 (22.42%)	184 (20.42%)	378 (41.95%)	187 (20.75%)	191 (21.2%)	603 (66.93%)	364 (40.4%)	239 (26.53%)	298 (33.07%)	104 (11.54%)	194 (21.53%)
Gaula	118	594	327 (55.05%)	267 (44.95%)	80 (13.47%)	45 (7.58%)	35 (5.89%)	74 (12.46%)	41 (6.9%)	33 (5.56%)	76 (12.79%)	43 (7.24%)	33 (5.56%)	433 (72.9%)	251 (42.26%)	182 (30.64%)	161 (27.1%)	76 (12.79%)	85 (14.31%)
Goaljor	148	695	349 (50.22%)	346 (49.78%)	82 (11.8%)	45 (6.47%)	37 (5.32%)	257 (36.98%)	128 (18.42%)	129 (18.56%)	225 (32.37%)	109 (15.68%)	116 (16.69%)	475 (68.35%)	264 (37.99%)	211 (30.36%)	220 (31.65%)	85 (12.23%)	135 (19.42%)
Khatni	114	520	269 (51.73%)	251 (48.27%)	49 (9.42%)	26 (5%)	23 (4.42%)	198 (38.08%)	96 (18.46%)	102 (19.62%)	12 (2.31%)	3 (0.58%)	9 (1.73%)	379 (72.88%)	207 (39.81%)	172 (33.08%)	141 (27.12%)	62 (11.92%)	79 (15.19%)
Mirzapur	261	1,089	536 (49.22%)	553 (50.78%)	113 (10.38%)	61 (5.6%)	52 (4.78%)	403 (37.01%)	201 (18.46%)	202 (18.55%)	193 (17.72%)	95 (8.72%)	98 (9%)	774 (71.07%)	400 (36.73%)	374 (34.34%)	315 (28.93%)	136 (12.49%)	179 (16.44%)
Jatarpur	73	289	144 (49.83%)	145 (50.17%)	24 (8.3%)	12 (4.15%)	12 (4.15%)	55 (19.03%)	27 (9.34%)	28 (9.69%)	27 (9.34%)	12 (4.15%)	15 (5.19%)	239 (82.7%)	124 (42.91%)	115 (39.79%)	50 (17.3%)	20 (6.92%)	30 (10.38%)
Saranpur	188	842	408 (48.46%)	434 (51.54%)	82 (9.74%)	37 (4.39%)	45 (5.34%)	89 (10.57%)	44 (5.23%)	45 (5.34%)	295 (35.04%)	154 (18.29%)	141 (16.75%)	644 (76.48%)	335 (39.79%)	309 (36.7%)	198 (23.52%)	73 (8.67%)	125 (14.85%)
Belgare	154	631	318 (50.4%)	313 (49.6%)	57 (9.03%)	36 (5.71%)	21 (3.33%)	334 (52.93%)	184 (29.16%)	150 (23.77%)	284 (45.01%)	132 (20.92%)	152 (24.09%)	439 (69.57%)	244 (38.67%)	195 (30.9%)	192 (30.43%)	74 (11.73%)	118 (18.7%)
Ochai	364	1,417	702 (49.54%)	715 (50.46%)	143 (10.09%)	75 (5.29%)	68 (4.8%)	249 (17.57%)	126 (8.89%)	123 (8.68%)	508 (35.85%)	245 (17.29%)	263 (18.56%)	1037 (73.18%)	551 (38.88%)	486 (34.3%)	380 (26.82%)	151 (10.66%)	229 (16.16%)
Soa	52	188	92 (48.94%)		96 (51.06%)	18 (9.57%)	5 (2.66%)	13 (6.91%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	89 (47.34%)	42 (22.34%)	129 (68.62%)	75 (39.89%)	54 (28.72%)	59 (31.38%)	17 (9.04%)	42 (22.34%)
TOTAL	4,769	20,084																	

Focus Group Discussions

To conduct the FGD the researcher organized the discussions based on some issues, viz., general data of the GP, Reports on the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009, Population status of the GP, Status of educational institutions under the GP, Literacy rate of GP, and Expenditure on schooling per student.

The following facts were revealed from the FGD:

A total of 31.79% child population existed in the GP area (16.16% boys and 15.62% girls). ST children were found in 22.06 % (10.72% boys and 11.34% girls). Hence ST girls were found higher in number coming to schools though females on average 30.91% population found still illiterate. The male and female literacy rates were 38.09% and 31.01% respectively.

Physical Visits of Schools

i. Concerning RTE Act as a Fundamental Right, parents expressed that they spend about Rs. 50 to 100 on an average per month per child for their schooling requirements including the transport cost so many of them struggle to bear this expenditure.

ii. An amount of fee of Rs. 50–100 is charged while admitting a child in the 6th standard even in Government schools.

- iii. Most of the premises and classrooms are found not so clean and sometimes children have to clean classrooms and the school compound themselves.
- iv. Toilets are often not in usable condition, non-availability of water, broken taps, or missing doors are common problems in schools.
- v. Teachers hardly have little time for classroom learning activities. Most of the time they become busy with non-academic activities.
- vi. Teachers don't take extra classes for children struggling to cope and unfortunately, the school environment often develops fear and anxiety among the young students.
- vii. No physical education practices take place in most of the schools.

Focus Group Discussion with members of the School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC)

- i. No senior person from Central or State authority has ever visited to monitor the process of implementation of the RTE Act in the schools after the implementation of the Law.
- ii. The requisitions made by the SDMCs to the local self-government generally receive very little attention.
- iii. Students' attendance rates are found Almost 78 % in the ICDS (up to 6 years) program, 81% in classes I to V (up to 10 years), about 62% in classes V to VIII (11 to 14 years), but above 14 years it was only about 54%.
- iv. Mid-day meals are found most significant activity in attending schools by the children.
- v. No teacher has ever undergone any intensive training program specifically under the RTE Act (2009) that focuses in particular on improving the quality of education.
- vi. Drinking water facility is not subject to filtration in most schools, hence not safe to drink.
- vii. Library does not exist in a real sense in most schools. In schools having library books, children are not allowed to borrow books; hence the library serves little or no purpose.
- viii. Uniforms are given, but just one pair, and that too is not of good quality.
- ix. Students are supposed to purchase shoes, socks, belts, ties, etc. separately if required.
- x. Most schools don't have playgrounds of their own.

Focus Group Discussion with Children

- No facility was available to listen the radio programs.
- School garden is mostly unavailable, destroyed, or unrestored to date.
- No sports ground and sports material available.
- Rare cultural activities or school programs are being taken place.
- Classrooms are found not so clean.
- Scarcity of classroom benches in many schools.

- Toilet is not clean; its door is missing and is not maintained.

Focus Group Discussion with Parents as Other Issues raised

- SDMC members do not visit schools as per the requirement to inspect the situation. Also, they do not attend the monthly meetings in schools.
- Little improvement in school due to the release of small grants by the Government.
- Teachers & SDMC members do not take initiative or interest in the school activities.
- Many teachers are not regular and even late to class; they are constantly using their cell phones during class hours that should be dedicated to the children.
- The schools are missing teachers for important subjects like Physical Education and Computer Studies.
- There is a great shortage of teachers very few are found permanent ones.
- There is a serious issue regarding drinking water at the schools; some schools lack so, while in others it is not seen as safe to use.

Focus Group Discussion with Members of Panchayat and SDMC SUGGESTIONS MADE

- Teachers need to be properly trained in the context of the demands of the RTE Act. And NEP (2020).
- Monthly meetings at the school level should be arranged to discuss school problems.
- School SDMC members list should be submitted to Panchayat.
- RTE training programs should be arranged by the Education Department for Panchayat members at the Panchayat level.

Other Issues Raised

- No information was provided to teachers about the RTE Act and its rules; there have been no programs for Panchayat members.
- There was no orientation of GP members.
- At the GP level, SDMC and Panchayat members have very poor ideas about the RTE's significance and operation.
- The Panchayat has very poor information about the school grants.
- Teachers were not appointed subject wise
- Allotment of school grants not discussed in SDMC meetings.

Analysis and Interpretation

i. One of the prime findings of the FGDs is that the RTE Act is primarily being violated at a very fundamental level. The essence of the Act is to provide 'Free and Compulsory Education' to all children in the country with "no discrimination" whatsoever. However, parents pointed out that they spend an average of Rs. 55 per month per child (upto the age of 14years) to sustain their children's needs in school. This is towards purchasing stationery items, uniform apparel, school shoes, socks, etc.

ii. Not only does this finding challenge the concept of education being “free”, but it also questions the idea of “no discrimination”. This is particularly because of concerned parents who are below the poverty line happen to get affected, as they are unable to provide these necessities to their children. Under Section 3 of the RTE Act, it is stated, “No child shall be liable to any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education”.

iii. At times, parents have to put more money from their disposable income into their children’s schooling. Even though the State must “provide funds and carry out the provisions of the concerned Act”, schools lack basic furniture such as desks and benches. The result is that poor parents purchase these items for the school or they must look for potential donors to get basic infrastructure to schools. Further, an admission fee of minimum `50–60 is charged on admitting a child into any class from 6th standard onwards when it is illegal to charge any such fee. Thus, education is not “free” by any stretch of the imagination.

iv. Another major issue that impacts the quality of education in the schools is lack of need-based training facilities for teachers. The law mandates that “the Central Government shall develop and enforce standards by “providing training facilities for teachers” to “ensure good quality education conforming to the standards prescribed under section 29 of the RTE Act”. In reality, these rules are not being adhered to, with the result that parents complain about teachers lacking expertise and seriousness about work. None of the training programs have been specific to ensuring the effective implementation of the RTE Act.

v. It is important to mention here that the “All round” as well as “Physical and Mental” Development of children are facets stressed by the Constitution. However, in exactly the way a proper learning atmosphere is not being built around the children, sufficient time is not given to children’s physical education. This is attributable to the following factors: Firstly, and most importantly, there is a lack of playgrounds in the schools. Secondly, the Physical Education (PE) time is slotted mostly for Saturdays only; the rest of the days involve no physical training. Finally, there is no P. E. / P.T. teacher or sports equipment to promote the “physical development” of the children.

vi. Another critical finding was related to sanitation in schools. There is no proper drinking water facility, as there is a lack of filtration from bore wells, in contrast to the requirement of “proper sanitation”. The mid-day meals children get, sometimes make them feel unwell and nauseous. Children mentioned that it even contains worms. This brings into question the sanitation of the kitchen and the care taken by the cooks. The toilets are found unusable due to non-availability of water, broken taps, or lack of doors in the cubicle. The children are required to clean the premises by means of sweeping and mopping, which includes the toilets. The children and their parents strongly feel that the school should have its own resources for maintaining cleanliness in the school.

vii. Majority of schools lack a boundary wall and a playground. There are some schools that do have boundary walls, but they are easily penetrable due to their short height or the holes which have developed in various parts. Technically, these schools should follow The Gazette of India Extraordinary, Para II, Section I, Article 29 (2) (d) and not have been allowed to be established as they did not “conform to the standards of the schedule”, which stipulates that every school must have a playground and a boundary wall.

Viii. The SDMCs are supposed to create a School Development Plan (SDP) which is to be funded by the State or Local Government. Despite being an entitlement, funds are seldom received. No doubt, the Panchayat receives an annual grant of Rs. 6 lacs, but a sum of Rs. 3 lacs is directly deducted as charges for electricity and Rs. 2.7 lacs for water. The remaining Rs. 30,000 is hardly sufficient to meet the rest of the needs including implementation of the RTE Act. The above issues rarely come to notice since there is no system of monitoring by the Central or State Government. In sum, it seems there lies a huge discrepancy between what is mandated by law and what is done at the grassroots level.

Suggestions made

- The school should provide books, notebooks shoes, and uniforms at the least.
- Larger amounts for implementing the RTE Act have to be released as grants.
- The school should appoint a PE/ PT and a Computer Teacher (in a cluster mode).
- SDMC members should visit the school regularly and monitor the happenings.
- GP and SDMC members need to collaborate in order to improve the school.
- Every month, minutes of the SDMC meetings should be submitted to the Education Officers (at Local Level).
- Education department should organize training programs for SDMC members at least twice a year.
- SDMC members should monitor the teachers.

Recommendations

The following specific recommendations are made in the FGDS:

- i. Conduct further massive awareness programs amongst primary stakeholders; children, parents, SDMC members, and Panchayat Members about their rights, roles, and responsibility so that quality education is provided as required by law.
- ii. Allocate funds to SDMCs in accordance with the School Development Plan (SDP) instead of enforcing plans from the top. The SDP in letter and spirit should be the democratic process of SDMCs. It is imperative that SDMCs should have complete freedom to identify the needs of the school with the government stepping in to fulfil the requirements, thus enabling them to promote a holistic development plan as specified in section 22 of the RTE Act (2009).
- iii. A specific regular grant for Education should be given to the Panchayat to fulfil its obligation under section 9 of the RTE Act.
- iv. Should have regular and proper inspection of schools in which schools are assessed on both a quantitative and qualitative basis. The inspection officer must evaluate whether the RTE Act is being followed in letter and spirit.
- v. Provide training facilities for teachers to enable them to teach children in the manner laid down under section 29 (2) in the RTE Act.
- vi. Formulation of Children's Vigilance Committee in the Panchayat for monitoring the effective implementation of the RTE Act. During the Focus Group Discussions, the primary stakeholders voiced their concerns on several other issues.

Conclusion

The basic premise of this study is to pay attention to the happenings in the 21 schools (15 Primary schools, 1 Elementary, 1 Secondary, and 4 Higher Secondary School) along with 30 ICDS programs and 1 degree College in the *Polba* GP, in order to understand the impact of the RTE Act. In the process, it has been noticed that a law of such importance holds little or no meaning for its primary stakeholders since it is constantly being violated, directly or indirectly, thereby defeating the very purpose of its enactment.

Most people in Indian society have lived in the hope that one day their dream of securing holistic education for all children - irrespective of their class, color, or creed - will become a reality. This is in fact the very essence of Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. However, there is a conclusive evidence from the study to prove that the hiatus between what is laid down by law and the ground realities is alarmingly colossal. Regarding the implementation of RTE Act the ideal RTE Act at the grass-root level and this has resulted in the path-breaking Act becoming unfortunately much less effective than what it was intended to be. Of course, it can be argued that the Act is not without its flaws, but there is no denying that better implementation of the existing provisions could have been achieved.

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