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## ***Summary of the ERIC Projects***

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# **A Study on Engagement of Students Enrolled through Lateral Entry under the Provisions of RTE Act, 2009**

### **Principal Investigators**

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The paradigm shift in school education as emphasised in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 has reinforced that the students in the school need to be perceived as a dynamic participant in the construction of her/his knowledge. With the emphasis on 'Education for All' and after the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009, 'all' children are entitled to have access to and opportunity for completion of elementary education. To achieve these goals, the importance of making learning environment adequately engaging has gained importance. The RTE mandates to ensure that not only every child has access to school, but also completes elementary education. It also expects the school to become 'the enabling and conducive environment' which facilitates and motivates a child to complete his/her education. Besides the extrinsic support through special training provision, it is necessary to ensure that students become intrinsically motivated and feel engaged with their school and with learning. This research attempted to identify factors influencing engagement of students who have been admitted to grades appropriate to their age in the schools in the light of RTE Act 2009.

The study was carried out in two states (Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh). In collaboration with the State Project Offices of the respective States and Project Coordinators (special training), districts were selected which had high density of the sample population. Two such districts from each State was included, namely Udhamasinghnagar and Nainital districts of Uttarakhand,

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and Khargone and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh. The sample consisted of 380 students from classes III to VIII admitted through age-appropriate admission under RTE Act 2009.

Data were collected from students and teachers using semi-structured interview schedules developed by the investigators. Parameters under each engagement dimension included: a) behavioural engagement such as participation in school activities, classroom and presence on task, b) emotional engagement such as positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academic activity and school; interest and enjoyment towards activities of classroom and school, sense of belongingness with school, and c) cognitive engagement such as volition learning, self regulation measure like planning, goal setting, persistence, resiliency, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and application of knowledge. The tool items were tried out on similar target population in a few government schools of Delhi. Responses of students were analysed based on the parameters of the following dimensions of engagement accompanied with a contextual grounding.

### ***Perceptions of students enrolled through lateral entry towards their teachers***

The students in both Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh perceived teachers as someone whom they 'should' like, as according to them, it is the teachers who make it possible for them to read and write. The students' perception of a teacher as the 'knowledge provider' and a role model of a righteous person led to their liking certain teachers and disliking few other teachers in the same school. Linked with their perception about the teachers the students were found to participate in activities of the class and school, and also perceived the school as 'belonging' to them.

### ***Perceptions of students enrolled through lateral entry towards their peers and self***

In both the States, peers who were cooperative, collaborated in learning and other activities, were caring and shared similar purpose of coming to school, i.e. 'to read-write' and learn something 'meaningful', were perceived as peers who are worthy of being liked. Use of foul language by peers in school premises, teasing and fighting were behaviours that were disliked by majority of the students interviewed in the study.

***Psychological needs of students enrolled through lateral entry***

The need to feel competent, being useful to significant stakeholders of the school (i.e. teachers, peers/classmates in school), need to feel 'belongingness', 'being part of a group' (affiliation with a group), need to share positive interpersonal relationship with teachers and peers and the 'need for a friendly and harmonious environment' were some of the psychological needs that emerged from analysis of the students' responses in both Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

***Predominance of behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions in students' engagement***

The analysis revealed that majority of the students was behaviourally and emotionally engaged with the school at the time of interview. Students who displayed active behavioural and emotional engagements were found to make efforts towards engaging on cognitive dimensions as well.

***Teachers' perceptions towards the lateral entry students enrolled in the school***

Teachers in both the States perceived that students from the sample population were largely interested in coming to school and were involved in studies. Teachers also perceived that majority of the students was at par with 'regular students', though there were some who needed more time than regular students in understanding concepts. The teachers' responses revealed that they did understand the students' family problems/responsibilities due to which attending school regularly was a problem and also the students lacked a favorable environment to study at home.

***Factors facilitating/impeding lateral entry students' engagement with school***

The factors impeding engagement in the sample population were poor conduct and using foul language by peers/classmates, by the teachers and by themselves, being made to feel 'separate' in the class/playground etc. by the teachers and/or the classmates, lack of appreciation of efforts made by the student, perceived lack of understanding of their family/home conditions by the teachers, non-comprehensibility of subject matter, and lack of adequate number of teachers in school that resulted into many classes going without any teacher and thus leaving scope for 'free-time' for the students during which they fought and quarreled with each other.

The findings have implication for designing suitable intervention programmes to facilitate learning and retention in school as well as for policy interventions. The study highlights that the engagement of lateral entry students with school is a collaborative endeavour between teachers and students as a team. This would have implications for designing interventions for engaging the targeted population by including strategies on fulfilling the psychological needs with an understanding of how the population perceives their teachers, peers as well as themselves as effective stakeholders.