
Summary of ERIC Projects

Adoption of RTE in Private Schools of Rural Punjab

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Education leads to individual freedom and empowerment, which yields significant societal development gains and makes an individual self-reliant. It is seen as the foundation of society, enabling economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability. Elementary education forms the foundation for all levels of learning and development. It empowers and equips individuals with analytical capabilities, instils confidence and fortifies them with determination to achieve goal-setting competencies. It, therefore, plays a pivotal role in improving the socio-economic condition of the nation. Cognizant of its duty to ensure that no individual is denied of this fundamental right to receive education, Government of India enacted the Right to Education Act 2009 which is regarded as landmark legislation. The *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009* stipulates that private schools reserve 25 per cent of seats at the entry level for children belonging to 'disadvantaged groups' and 'weaker sections'. The Central Act originally defined a 'child belonging to a disadvantaged group' as one belonging to a Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, socially and educationally backward class or such other group facing disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or other similar factors. This study is an attempt to explore the role of the private sector (schools) that can play an important role in the implementation of RTE.

Objectives

- To know the status of adoption of RTE Act 2009 in private school of rural Punjab.

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- To identify the problems faced in implementing RTE Act 2009 in private schools of rural Punjab.
- To find out measures taken by government for private schools that failed to adopt RTE.
- To find out suggestion for effective implementation of RTE in private schools of rural Punjab.

Research Questions

- Are private schools made 25 per cent compulsory reservation? If not why?
- Are private schools charging any type of fees from such students?
- Are the teachers appointed are qualified and paid as per government rules?
- Are students admitted to the school without any admission test/age proof?
- Have private schools made provision for one classroom of standard size for each section?
- Do teachers take proper interests in providing education and other activities to such students?

Sample of the Study

The locale of study was rural areas of Punjab. All 20 districts (except 2 newly created) were grouped into 3 categories on the basis of rural literacy rate defined as highly educated, thinly educated and moderately educated. From each group, two districts were selected on the basis of rural literacy rate and keeping regional distribution in mind. 450 private schools (nearly one-third of the total private schools) were selected from 6 districts. Finally, 4525 teachers (30 per cent) were interviewed to collect necessary information.

Tools Used

To meet the objectives of the study, a series of questionnaires were prepared for principals, teachers and for parents, separately. Interviews were also conducted for obtaining required information. Official publications such as Statistical Abstract of Punjab and Economic Surveys of Punjab were explored for necessary data.

Major Findings

It is ascertain that the present study highlights the status of implementation of Right to Education, 2009 in Punjab. However, the investigator is not hesitant to say that RTE in Punjab is not

implemented in a transparent way and in its true spirits. There were 9125 private schools functioning in Punjab during 2013–14. Districts such as Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Barnala, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar and Patiala claimed the considerable number of private schools (nearly 46.86%). Thus, the percentage of the private schools highlights the roles they play in providing quality education. But, most of the private schools in the State have showed poor response in admitting children from weaker sections. Director General School Education (DGSE) Punjab is the sole authority responsible to regulate and monitoring the implementation of Right to Education in the state. However, it was found that official of DGSE office as well as its district and block level staff did not monitor the data effectively and was fully depended upon the Self Declaration Form filled by the private schools. As a result guidelines provided by the Government under the Act are not strictly followed by private schools. Authorities accountable for providing necessary data for the study were seemed non-cooperative. It is also observed that schools under private management seem better but still over 40 per cent do not meet the minimum standards of teaching. Also, majority of teachers in private schools were unqualified/under qualified in Punjab (47.67 per cent).

On the government's part, as many as 931 private schools in Punjab have been closed for non-compliance of the Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education (RTE) norms and the process of de-recognition and closure of 219 such schools have started. Present study has also highlighted various elementary/primary schools in the state were neither following any uniform curriculum nor having proper infrastructure.

Conclusion

With the RTE coming into force, there is an expectation that this will finally be translated into provision of quality school education for all children. The challenge before RTE is not only of money resources and higher budget spending for primary education. The major challenge is to scout pack our primary schools with quality teachers with skills of transmitting knowledge to each differently placed child and wedded to the values of love and compassion. Thus, in spite a school being private or public, RTE act must be adopted and followed for providing better education to children by every school and concerned authorities.