

# Implementation of RTE and Status of KGBVs in Gujarat

KASHYAPI AWASTHI\*

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## Abstract

*The paper discusses the status of KGBVs in Gujarat vis-à-vis the norms and standards specified in RTE for minimum infrastructure, appointment of teachers, teacher qualification and training, pupil-teacher ratio, academic responsibility, community participation and quality interventions. The paper is an outcome of the research undertaken to study the Impact of KGBVs on Girls Education and Retention and exhausts all the 86 KGBVs spread across 19 districts (as in 2012) in Gujarat under the management of both SSA and Mahila Samakhya (MS). The tools for data collection included information schedule, check-list, observation schedule, questionnaire and unstructured interview with the school heads, teachers and members of the community, the CRCC, BRCC and Gender coordinator in district as well as state. The findings of the study reflect a mixed picture of the status of KGBVs vis-à-vis the fulfilment of norms and standards under RTE. Regarding the “retention”, it was observed that success has been achieved in bringing the girls to KGBVs with the consent of their parents. However, the promise to quality education which was the underlying focus of the KGBV scheme is still a matter of serious concern. KGBVs have a greater purpose, much beyond good food, clothes, play and a safe stay; this needs to be clear both to the functionaries as also the beneficiaries.*

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\* Assistant Professor, National Centre for School Leadership, NUEPA, 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights. It is a cornerstone of social and economic development and has a vital role to play in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth (Art. 13, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, education in India was for the privileged few until the Article 45 which promised free and compulsory education to all in the 6–14 age groups. However, it was made a part of the Directive Principles of the State Policy and did not come with any accountability framework or guidelines or mechanism for providing free and compulsory education to all. Universalisation of Elementary Education, though promised could never get the required focus until the launch of Operation Blackboard (OBB) in 1984 followed by the Mid Day Meal Scheme, the DPEP and SSA. These schemes contributed to a great extent in expanding the elementary education across the country and reaching the unreached. Education of girls has been a national priority for the Government of India and number of schemes, programmes and scholarships being announced for the girl child. However, it is seen that girls' education has suffered for many

reasons in our society. Reaching out to the girl child is central to the efforts to universalise elementary education. To target pockets where girls education is lagging behind, the Government of India under SSA has launched two focused interventions for girls, the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), to reach out to girls from marginalised social groups in over 3,282 educationally backward blocks in the country where the female rural literacy is below the national average and the gender gap in literacy is above the national average. The issue of retention and successful grade completion among girls still remained an issue in spite of the consistent efforts both at the national and state levels.

## WHAT IS RIGHT TO EDUCATION?

The RTE is a fundamental right that enshrined in law for the first time the rights of all Indian children aged between 6–14 years to free and compulsory elementary education regardless of caste, class, gender, etc. (Article 21A). Fundamental rights are justiciable which means that one can go to court of justice in case of denial of the right. The RTE Act, though deserves due credit for laying down in fairly specific terms awareness on the part of schools and concerned authority to provide free and compulsory elementary education to all children; how far it takes cognizance of the present reality

of the schools across the country and the readiness of the states to bear the financial implications is still a question. What provisions the right provides to take action against the faltering individuals or concerned authorities that are not able to ensure fulfilment of the standards and norms prescribed in the RTE Act 2009.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

The Act clearly defines the schooling-related entitlements of a child which include the norms for physical infrastructure and teachers, and the responsibilities of the school, school heads, community and local authorities. All these norms, standards and provisions are applicable to each and every school providing education from Grades I to VIII whether run by government or private entities. The following are the norms specified for all elementary schools in the country.

*Providing free and compulsory (admission, attendance and completion of EE) education in a neighbourhood school (Article 13(2)A of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and Article 21, Right to Education)*

**Free:** Removal by the state of any financial barrier that prevents a child from completing eight years of schooling.

**Compulsion:** on the state; parental duty to send children to school. Not enrolled/dropout children be admitted to age-appropriate class after a period of special training.

**No detention:** No child shall be failed or expelled from school up to Class 8 (corresponds to the age group 6–14 years).

*Norms and standards specified are applicable to all schools.*

Establishment of neighbourhood schools within three years with provision of minimum school infrastructure like:

1. All weather school buildings.
2. One-classroom-one-teacher.
3. Head Teacher cum Office room, library.
4. Toilets, drinking water and kitchen sheds.
5. Barrier free access.
6. Playground, fencing and boundary walls.

*Qualification for appointment of teachers as laid down at the national level are:*

1. Appointment of teachers through the Teacher Eligibility Test.
2. Academic responsibility of the teachers specified.
3. No private tuition by full-time school teachers.
4. Teacher–Pupil ratio of 1:30.
5. School days (200 to 220 days) and total instructional hours (800 to 1,000 hours).
6. Working days for teachers — weekly hours of work.
7. Provision of teachers as per prescribed PTR within three years.
8. Training of untrained teachers within a period of five years.

*Community participation ensured through School Management Committee.*

1. SMC includes parents, teachers and elected representatives.
2. 3/4 members from among parents of children in the school.
3. Proportionate representation to weaker and deprived sections.

*Allocation of major responsibility to the Local Authority — Panchayati Raj system.*

1. Proactively monitor the delivery of rights and entitlements of children.

*Independent monitoring of the implementation of the Act is assigned to the National Council of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).*

1. Examine and review safeguards for rights under this Act, recommend measures for effective implementation.
2. Inquire into complaints relating to child's right to free and compulsory education.
3. Conduct periodic social audit of the status of implementation (Govinda, 2011).

Considering that a large number of schools, majority of them being located in the state sector, do not currently fulfil these norms, this is indeed a huge thrust for accountability on the part of the State. The implementation of the Act involves serious financial and governance challenges. Considering that different Indian states are at different stages of development both in terms of economic and educational

indicators, these challenges are also likely to manifest differently. On the other hand, even those states that do not face major financial challenges need to put systems and processes in place to improve their delivery and meet the RTE expectations in true spirit and achieve the dream of Universalisation of Elementary Education. (Jha *et al.*, 2013)

It is seen that girls' education in India has suffered for many reasons in our society. Reaching out to the girl child is central to the efforts to universalise elementary education as also to RTE. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* or "Education for All" programme recognises that ensuring girl's education requires changes not only in the education system but also in societal norms and attitudes. The research paper has tried to study the status of the KGBVs in Gujarat and explores how far they have met the norms prescribed in the RTE.

### **STATUS OF KGBVs IN GUJARAT AND COMPLIANCE WITH RTE**

The study conducted a detailed survey of all 86 KGBVs of Gujarat managed by both SSA and *Mahila Samakhya*. The survey studied the status of KGBVs with regard to the availability, adequacy, usability, relevance and appropriate utilisation of infrastructural resources, the profile of teachers and students and their appointment and number of working days, the enrolment patterns, retention rate and drop-out of girls in KGBV, the social relationship within

staff members, teachers and girls and amongst girls and the teaching learning process in KGBVs in terms of the achievement of students and the observation of classroom teaching. Thus it attempted to study the compliance of KGBVs in Gujarat with norms and standards set for minimum infrastructural resource, teacher appointment and academic work and the quality interventions.

The tools used for data collection included an information schedule, observation schedule for observing classroom teaching, focus group discussion, questionnaire for teachers, gender coordinator, CRCC/BRCC and achievement test for students in Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8. The tools were designed with the experts in education through a workshop and translated into Gujarati.

The achievement test used in the present study was drawn from the syllabus that had been taught in the first term and for which examinations had been conducted in all the KGBVs. The achievement test (Total marks: 50) included all the subjects Physical Education (Marks: 7), Gujarati (Marks: 7), Hindi (Marks: 7), English (Marks: 7), Social Studies (Marks: 7), Science (Marks: 7) and Mathematics (Marks: 8); for the Classes V, VI, VII and VIII. The duration of two hours was given to each student to complete the test, after making appropriate seating arrangements to avoid any sort of malpractices.

The data collection was done personally by a team of five field

investigators interviewed and trained through mock sessions for a week in understanding the tools and using them during data collection. This was accompanied by random visits to any KGBV in the given zone to cross-check the data. Factual information was analysed quantitatively using frequency and percentage analysis while information obtained through observation, focused group discussion, interview schedule, field notes and field diary was content analysed.

### **FINDINGS**

The objective of KGBV is to ensure access and quality education to girls from disadvantaged groups by setting up residential schools at upper primary level. The child entitlements promised under RTE can be classified under three main categories: access related, school facilities and teachers related, and learning process related. The findings discuss the status of KGBV with regard to the child entitlements in these residential schools and how far these schools fulfil the objective of their establishment.

### **ACCESS TO KGBV**

There are 86 KGBVs spread across 86 educationally backward blocks in 19 districts in Gujarat, established either under SSA or *Mahila Samakhya*. Of these, 43 are Model/Type I, 21 are Model/Type II and 22 are Model/Type III.

While these provide access to the

girls in these blocks, the interaction with children and the available data on registers in most of the KGBVs revealed that they were already going to school and were discontinued from regular schools and admitted to these residential schools.

- About 66.54 per cent of the girls had been to the school before coming to KGBV. However, the identification whether these girls were really dropouts was not possible.
- There were about 12.67 per cent of the girls who had never been to school. It has to be noted that the records for about 21.0 per cent of the girls' educational status before coming to KGBV was not known from the records available at KGBV.

The enrolment data also stated that out of 6,243 girls at KGBVs 1,957 were from OBC category, 2,095 were ST, 282 were SC, 62 from general category and 47 were from minority community. Thus a good representation of those from disadvantaged categories was seen.

### **SCHOOL FACILITIES IN KGBV**

KGBVs being residential schools, apart from an all weather building and sufficient classrooms, the facilities for boarding and lodging, kitchen shed and healthy and safe food and grocery items, safe drinking water, sufficient washrooms for all girls, an open play ground, cleanliness and hygiene and safety and security of girls are very important.

- Of the 86 (100 per cent) KGBVs visited, 58.1 per cent had their own building while the remaining were running in rented accommodations. The difficulties faced at a rented accommodation by the resident teachers and girls were many, which varied from unhygienic and suffocating environment to lack of drinking and toilet facilities, open kitchen area and safety and security issues as well. Many of these have the permission to have their own building but it was either under construction or the construction was yet to begin due to several administrative problems.
- The availability of material resources was not a problem in most of the cases but adequacy, usability and appropriate utilisation was not observed in many cases, e.g., the sewing machines, RO system, etc., were available in most of the cases but not in working condition and were just utilising the storage space.
- More than 80.0 per cent have stated that there is problem in availing the daily requirements like milk, vegetables, etc., due to the location of KGBV. The absence of milk and/or milk products in the regular menu at the KGBVs becomes a serious issue. The availability of sufficient quantity of food was not a problem in almost every KGBV but its quality was a subjective matter. There was a lack of variety in vegetables

- in many of the cases and fruits were absent from the menu in almost all the KGBVs.
- Although in 55.0 per cent of the cases the market was within 0–5 km, in about 65.12 per cent cases the nearest hospital was within 0–5 km from KGBV while in most of the cases, i.e., 91.86 per cent the nearest village was within 0–5 per cent km. The point is that the nearest village or market or hospital is also not equipped with sufficient amount of necessities, hence, it was found that children hardly got milk and green vegetables in their daily diet.
  - The availability of appropriate mode of transport or sometimes any means of transport is also a question after a certain hour of the day in many of the KGBVs due to their remote location.
  - The grants are also not received timely. But about 73 per cent of the teachers stated that the books, uniforms, sweaters and other necessities are availed timely at KGBVs.
  - The absence of compound wall and gate at the KGBV was seen in 20 per cent of the cases, which is a serious issue regarding the safety and security of the residents of KGBV.
  - In 9.3 per cent of the cases, open hanging wires have been observed in the KGBV building. This is very dangerous for the inmates who are not fully aware of the dangers associated with it.
  - Cleanliness and hygiene are issues which need immediate attention in many KGBVs.
  - In 4.23 per cent of KGBVs managed by SSA, the outlet for water from toilet and bathroom was into open ground behind the building which was very unhygienic.
  - In 13.33 per cent of cases (KGBV managed by MS) and 16.9 per cent of the cases (KGBV managed by SSA), there was no arrangement for sewage at KGBV. This also should draw attention of the authorities as to there is no fund allotted for such facilities.
  - About 75.16 per cent of the teachers stated that there is a concern regarding the security of the girls at KGBV.

#### **TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN KGBVs**

- About 43.9 per cent of the teachers have done PTC and except for the 7 per cent of the teachers who did not respond, all of them were either graduates or post graduates with a professional degree. The staff in all KGBVs were well qualified.
- The presence of good number of physical education teachers was reflected in the students' achievements in various competitions at the state and national levels.
- Of the total recruitment there was only 1.1 per cent with graduation in science and a few in the post graduate category also, but could not fulfil the need of the Science/Math teachers at KGBV reflected

in the performance of students in the two subjects.

- About 22.1 per cent of them have been working as head teachers and 57.2 per cent of them are full-time teachers while 15.6 per cent are part-time teachers. Due to poor transportation or place of residence being far away, the part-time teachers also stayed in the campus as full-timers in most cases.
- About 13.9 per cent of the teachers had 4–5 years of teaching experience while about 71.7 per cent of the teachers had 1–3 years of experience.
- About 18.7 per cent of them had received training in teaching skills. About 36 per cent of them had obtained training in teaching Mathematics and Science and 4 per cent had received training for administrative skills.
- Teachers felt that they needed training in making and using TLM effectively for teaching the girls at KGBV, teaching of Mathematics in Class VIII, activity-oriented approach in teaching Science, vocational skills that are in demand amongst the children and their parents.
- On an average, on the day of visit 86.69 per cent of teachers and 79.66 per cent of students were found to be present. The PTR on the day of visit was 16.25 and as per records it was 17.69. Except for few cases, the situation seemed to be practically ideal for teaching learning process.
- With regard to PTR for each district, Valsad stood at the top with regard to both teacher and student attendance. Amreli had the lowest percentage of teacher's attendance and Mehsana showed lowest in student attendance.
- In Kheda, PTR was found to be high while it was found to be lowest in Panchmahal. However, the achievement shows lowest scores in the district.
- There was a lack of job satisfaction amongst the teachers owing to low salary, contractual appointments and a 24 hours responsibility. (About 65.0 per cent were not satisfied with the salary they receive). Nevertheless, it was surprising, the teachers (about 73.0 per cent) were wishing to continue to work at KGBV and about 96.4 per cent said that they enjoy being at KGBV and attributed this to the positive social relationship with colleagues and the students.
- The teachers also expressed that they have learnt to live in cooperation and harmony with all in KGBV. They identify the strengths and potentials of the colleagues and learn from each other the skills to live together.

#### **SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES AND PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS IN KGBVs**

- While the KGBVs did not have a record of the SMCs, interaction



with the teachers revealed that the *sarpanch* and key members in the community were active members and all decisions were taken with joint decision of the head teacher, the *sarpanch* and the CRCC.

- In case of PTAs, 83.0 per cent teachers said they faced problems in arranging PTA meetings. However, matters with regard to the progress of the child were discussed while parents came to leave or pick their wards.
- About 27.82 per cent (74) teachers said that the parents are interested to continue education for the girls. About 19.92 per cent (53) teachers said that the progress in girls is observed and appreciated by the parents and their community. So, they wish for a better future for their girls.
- About 14.29 per cent (38) teachers said that the topic of educating the girls for making them self-sufficient is the main focus in the parent-teacher meet at KGBVs. Financial conditions of parents and other problems are also discussed at length.
- About 13.16 per cent (35) teachers said that parents are ready for secondary education if it were in KGBV or similar residential schools but not in regular co-education schools.
- About 4.89 per cent (13) teachers reported that parents are not interested in educating girls after they attain maturity. The girls are married off early in their community.

### Teaching-learning in KGBVs

- Approximately 83 per cent of the teachers stated that they get academic support from CRCC and/or OIC gender.
- The academic classes were reported to be monitored properly by CRCC in approximately 94 per cent of the cases and it was stated that in most of the cases (i.e., 92 per cent) get feedback regarding the teaching-learning process and the content taught. If this was the case then the teaching-learning processes at KGBV should have been better than what was observed in the present study.
- Grade-wise time-table was available in 40 per cent of KGBVs; however, children in most of the cases were not aware of what they were going to learn.
- Almost equal number of classes for all grades were observed, however, when it came to subject-wise distribution, more language classes were observed for the teachers chose to teach language preferably *Gujarati*, followed by Science. Only in 16.6 per cent of the cases the teacher conducted activity during the classroom teaching. The teacher gave homework in about 35.09 per cent cases.
- In about 65 per cent of the cases, the students spend more than 60 per cent of the time in the class listening to teachers' lectures only. In 16.7 per cent of the classes observed, there was no initiation from the students' side during the

whole class. While in about 10 per cent of the cases student initiation was observed either for reading or demonstrating or asking doubt.

- We observed that in about 35 per cent of classes, the students remained silent and confused.
- Students were not at all enthusiastic in learning in 2.6 per cent of the classes observed. While in about 5.5 per cent of the cases, enthusiasm was observed more than 90 per cent of the time in the class.
- Students did not participate in any activity in 9.6 per cent of the classes observed. While in about 6 per cent of the cases, participation in activities was observed for more than 90 per cent of the time.
- In spite of all the facilities being provided and so much of funds utilised for the academic upliftment of the girls, their achievement did not reflect a good status. The percentage average achievement of the KGBVs spread across the state in all the subjects together is 45.76 per cent. The same for each subject: 65.71 per cent in Physical Education, 34.86 per cent in Gujarati, 43.57 per cent in English, 36.57 per cent in Hindi, 48.86 per cent in Science, 58.43 per cent in Social Studies and 33.88 per cent in Mathematics. The achievement of girls was in a very sorry state except for Physical Education. In districts like Panchmahal and Bhavnagar, achievement in even

Physical Education was found to be very poor.

- The districts Junagadh, Mehsana and Narmada showed better performance compared to other districts of the state, while the districts Panchmahal, Vadodara and Surrendranagar showed very low performance when all subjects were considered together.
- There were two KGBVs, KGBV, Manki (Deesa) of Banaskantha [KGBV-10(Ba/I/S)] and KGBV, Kajardi (Una) of Junagadh [KGBV-33(Ju/I/S)] excelling in academics when compared to the other KGBVs. There were other two KGBVs, KGBV, Godhra [KGBV-55(Pc/II/M)] and KGBV, Doli (Santrampur) [KGBV-56(Pc/II/M)] from Panchmahal district showing the least scores of achievement amongst the girls in all the subjects. It was ironical that these two KGBVs showed the lowest PTR as in the records.
- KGBV has played a very important role in making the people realise the importance of education in a girl's life. KGBV made it practical for parents of girls at KGBV to see their girl child in school and learning, because for them meeting the daily needs was difficult, so education could never appear in the list of tasks for their children. There was an increasing readiness amongst parents to give secondary education to their child further in some residential schools like KGBV where child is secure

and well taken care of. Many girls continued studying in *ashram shalas* and regular schools in the vicinity of their residence. Thus KGBVs to that extent fulfilled the objective of enrolling and retaining children providing them free and compulsory elementary education up to the age of 14 years. However, quality of the education was still a question mark.

### DISCUSSION

The teachers are the kingpin of the entire education system and it is this factor on which lies the onerous responsibility of ensuring the effective implementation of RTE Act (Kaushal, 2012). While the teachers in KGBVs were professionally qualified, most of them had their basic degrees in Arts, hardly 1.1 per cent had degrees in Science. Classroom observations and poor achievement of students in languages gave evidence of the quality of teaching-learning, the content knowledge and professional training of the teachers. Interactions with the teachers revealed that they hardly had any knowledge on pedagogy or anything beyond the textbooks, about the culture and lifestyle of the girls and such other essentials which would make teaching-learning interesting and increase the retention. This in turn reflected on the current day teacher education programmes ill suited to meet the needs of students. Given the immense importance of this link, it is ironical that there has been a continuous reluctance on the part

of the state to respond to this issue with the seriousness it deserves and given the target of RTE, which has to be achieved in five years, it is likely that the quality of teachers' education will be compromised.

In all the 86 KGBVs it was found that except for Physical Education and Social Science, students were poor in other subjects, even in Gujarati which is supposed to be the mother-tongue and the spoken language of the state. The non-detention policy of the RTE Act supposedly may promote a child from one class to another but mere declaration of non-detention policy is not enough to eliminate the root cause of stagnation. Instead, concepts like self-assessment and self-development need to be inculcated.

Under the pressure to meet the national and international commitment, the progress towards Universalisation of Elementary Education is being viewed unduly in terms of meeting quantitative targets. There seems to be an inadequate focus on schooling processes and outcomes. Central as well as state governments are heavily preoccupied with reporting the progress in terms of expansion of the schooling facilities and coverage of children in the relevant age group and hence, neglecting the qualitative aspects (Kaushal, 2012). The study reports that the number of KGBVs expanded from 31 in 2005 to 86 in 2011 of which 40 per cent are running in rented buildings with lot of physical and infrastructural constraints, compromising the safety

and security of girls. The quality of life and teaching-learning both in this case is at stake. Even the children enrolled in the KGBVs are not from far-off villages or of migratory parents, rather of the farmers who stay in the neighbourhood, and the records as well as the interaction with the children revealed that very few of them were out-of-school or never enrolled. In fact they were convinced to join the KGBV and had come from the neighbouring school, so the basic purpose of providing access and residential facilities to the out-of-school, never enrolled or drop-out girls, who due to societal norms have not been able to make it to schools, remains forfeited. However, the positive aspect was that most of the girls enrolled belonged to disadvantaged groups.

The formal school system, denies space to children and teachers to engage with subjective experiences and life as it plays out for the student. The regime of standardisation dominates the schooling system and leads to the fragmentation of learners' lives (Kaushal, 2012). KGBVs being residential schools were observed to have provided sufficient space for unfoldment of one's experiences, the teacher-student relationship rather than being confined in hierarchical terms was more of a friend, an elder sister. However, the sad part was that this closeness in social relationship was not being capitalised to use the life experiences of child for learning subject-based knowledge. Learning

of basic mannerisms, values like cleanliness, sisterhood, harmony, tolerance, sportsmanship, etc., was being developed.

It is, therefore, advocated to create learning environments that invite children to share and to create curricula and content that the participating children find enough to connect with and express themselves.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights covers the right to education most comprehensively and explains that education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit the following interrelated and essential features, *viz.*, Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability which is to say availability of sufficient schools within the jurisdiction of state, physical, social and economic accessibility to schools, teaching methods and content that find meaning with the cultural context, is relevant and of good quality and is flexible to accept the needs of changing society. Perhaps for education in India and specifically for the KGBVs, it can be said that only the first A, i.e., availability of educational institutions has been ensured, the issue of accessibility haunts many of our schools where inclusive classrooms and inclusive schools is still a distant reality. Availability of schools or schooling facilities was not an issue in Gujarat. The PTR of 1:16 was also ideal and teachers were

professionally qualified which is to say that some amount of success has been achieved in terms of providing access, required facilities and qualified teachers. However, rationalisation of teachers' appointment and improving the quality of teaching-learning is required for impacting the achievement of children in all subjects. This meant fulfilling the Acceptability and Adaptability norms in the absence of which education may find little meaning to the child's world of learning.

This would require seeing RTE not just as a right but as a duty and adding the fifth 'A' that is Accountability. While having RTE as fundamental right itself ensures its justiciability, the outlined model rules do not specify any action in

case of denial of any of the norms/features or standards of RTE. The entire system will, therefore, have to be self accountable if RTE has to be a reality in the true sense, ensuring all five 'A's. The beneficiaries and the functionaries together need to understand the real purpose of education which is much beyond availability of free food, clothes, books and scholarships or a safe stay. A dream has to be nurtured in the children for a better and secure future by making them self-reliant and helping them to grow knowing and respecting the realities of both the worlds, one from which they come and the one which we are training them for that in the truest sense would mean achieving the Right to Education for all.

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