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Quality Dimensions of Elementary Education under RTE Act 2009

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What is 'Quality' Education?

Education is the backbone of a nation. The aim of education is expected to reflect the current needs and aspirations of a society as well as its lasting values. The aim of education serves as broad guidelines to align educational process to choose ideal and accepted principles. We would need to ensure that the aim of education is reflected in curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and other learning materials developed by us. Therefore an intelligent society will always invest in quality education for its children and youth.

According to Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the aim of education is not acquisition of information although important or acquisition of technical skills, though essential in modern society, but the development of that bent of mind, that attitude of reason, that spirit of democracy which make us responsible citizens.

Mahatma Gandhi expressed that true education is the one that draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical facilities of children; he felt that craft or any other productive work could be the best medium of education. Apart from making education relevant to society, it should result in all round development of a child's personality. In Gandhiji's scheme, relevance was an important attribute of the quality of education.

According to the International Commission on Education, the concept of quality education revolves around four fundamental pillars of learning, i.e. learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

According to Section 29 of the RTE Act, eight factors should be taken into consideration to lay down the curriculum and the evaluation procedure for maintaining quality in education:

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1. Conformity with constitutional values;
2. All round development of the child;
3. Building-up the child's knowledge, potentiality and talent;
4. Development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent;
5. Learning through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child-centred manner
6. The child's mother tongue serving 'as far as practicable' as the medium of instruction;
7. Making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety and helping the child to express views freely; and
8. Comprehensive and continuous evaluation of the child's understanding of knowledge and the ability to apply it.

Quality education must ensure the child's all round development, i.e. physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of his/her potential. Education is a lifelong learning process. The advancements in various aspects require continuous updating of knowledge and skills. Consequently a major function of education should be to promote capability to continuously learn and adopt to changes. Education itself is undergoing change in content as well as in delivery process.

Quality Dimensions in RTE Act:

The dimensions of quality stated in RTE Act include curriculum, teaching-learning, medium of instruction, learning resources, evaluation,

instructional time, teacher qualification and school environment.

I. Curriculum and Learning Resources

- **Curriculum and Syllabus:** The curriculum tells us what is worth teaching, how much should be taught and in what sequence, with what methods and materials, the linkages across different aspects of knowledge, how learning should be assessed, how teachers be prepared and how schools be monitored. However, while developing curriculum, ground realities are ignored. The language of child, social context of child (many of whom are first generation of school goers), gender disparities do not factor in curricular design. Lack of understanding of these ground realities and common understanding among different agencies responsible for the core-curriculum components is often seen in the plethora of material prepared by different agencies. Any attempt to improve the quality of education will succeed only if it goes hand in hand with steps to promote equity and social justice. This can be achieved when children from different backgrounds, particularly those from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections of the society are represented in the curricular group.

There has been general tendency in the system to load the syllabus of early

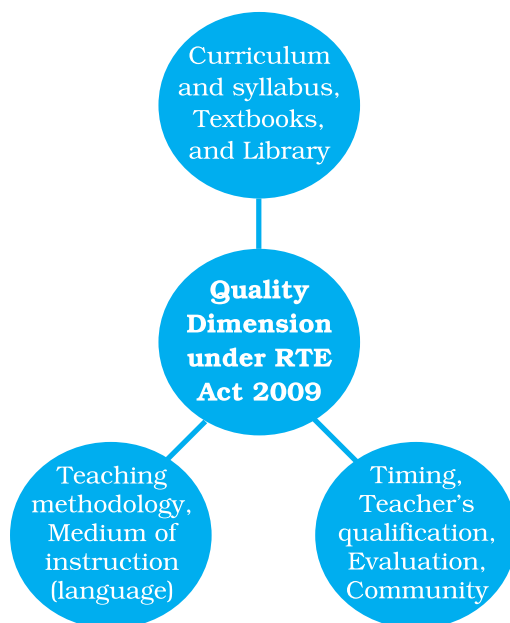
classes with topics which were earlier introduced in secondary and higher secondary classes. The Yash Pal Committee report, *Learning Without Burden* (1993) had analysed the problem of curriculum load in terms of erroneous concept of knowledge. NCF-2005 has also made an attempt to redress this problem.

According to the RTE Act (2009) following points should be included in framing and designing of the curriculum and syllabus:

- Resonance of the values enshrined in the constitution of India.
- Sensitivity to gender, caste and class parity, peace, health and needs of children with disabilities.
- Infusion of environment related knowledge and work related attitude in all subjects and at all levels.
- Linkages between school knowledge in different subjects and children's development and continuity from one level to next level.
- Inter-disciplinary and thematic linkages between topics listed for different school subjects, which fall under discrete disciplinary areas.
- Nurturing aesthetic sensibility and values by integrating the arts and India's heritage of craft in every aspect of the curriculum.
- **Textbooks:** Textbooks should be designed such that they focus on understanding concepts, encourage reflective thinking, provide

interactive space for children and activities for group as well as individual work with evaluation happening in a continuous manner.

- Art and craft education, health and physical education and work education must be incorporated with other subjects in teaching-learning process.



- **Library:** Library is an essential component of the school, providing resources of learning, and also for strengthening the idea of reading for pleasure, recreation and further deepening of knowledge and imagination. Library plays a very important role in education of the students. Therefore each and every school should have a well-stocked library.

- **Community Resources:** Community is a rich local resource. This local knowledge can provide a rich learning resource for children. Schools must explore the potential of such learning resources. NCF-2005 recommends that schools need to relate to children's knowledge and experience and relate knowledge inside the classroom of life outside the school. According to the RTE act community participation would be a central and overarching factor in planning, implementation and monitoring interventions for universal elementary education (UEE).

II. Pedagogy and Medium of Instructions

- **Teaching Methodology**

Teachers need to move away from the traditional methods of teaching and bring into the classroom new and innovating approaches to teach the content and lifelong skills. It is important to utilize a variety of techniques for the children to build their own understanding through real world applications and interactions with their peers in group activities. Teacher dominated pedagogy, placing children in a passive role is undesirable. A child-centred, active pedagogy, cooperative learning, problem solving, play way and activity based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage.

- **Medium of Instruction**

The choice of language(s) used in school is of utmost importance for the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence shows that instructions in the learner's first language improve learning cost effectiveness and reduce dropout rates. After the first few years of schooling a gradual transition to the second language may take place. Language policy also affects pedagogy.

"The foreign medium puts an undue stress on our children, makes them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought and disabled them for filtrating their learning to the family or the masses" (*Young India*, 1 September 1921)

Therefore, till the end of the primary stage, no other language except the pupils first language should be permitted as the medium of instruction.

- **Evaluation Procedures**

The prevailing examination system treats evaluation as a means of judging and passing verdict. Such a practice is incompatible with the concept of 'child centred education', and has been prohibited through the provision of 'No Detention' under the RTE Act. RTE recommends continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). CCE means evaluation should be treated as an integral and continuous part of teaching, rather than as an event

which follows the completion of teaching.

- **Instructional Time**

The RTE Act mandates 200 school days at the primary level and 220 school days at the upper primary level. This Act provides that teachers will not be assigned non-academic work (barring decennial census, election and disaster management). This act provides that teachers should put in 45 working hours per week. This would include time required for planning and preparation, TLM preparation, transacting the curriculum, assessment of children's work, providing academic and emotional support to children who need such support, interaction with parents and community. It prohibits teachers from taking private tuition.

III. Teacher Qualification

Teacher is a person who motivates children to construct his/her own knowledge. The RTE Act recognises the importance of teacher's professional qualification. According to Section 23 of the RTE Act, teacher qualification, laid down by the NCTE, would be followed in future recruitments.

Conclusion

Quality in and of education has always been a priority area and a prominent agenda of several committees and commissions on education. Consistent efforts have been made in the past to improve the quality of elementary education. The NPE (1986) and modified Plan of Action 1992 had recommended a number of measures for improvement in the quality of education through reforms in content and process of classroom teaching, improvement in school facilities, provision of additional teachers, standardizing levels of learning at primary stage and so on. A large number of national and state programmes were launched in this direction. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 also focuses on quality education. Although there has been substantial improvement in access, enrolment, retention and reduced gender disparities at various levels, the quality improvement in education in general and learner's achievement in particular, have not recorded as much progress as was desired or was considered necessary. Providing quality education to all children up to the age 14 years is one of the major goals of RTE/ SSA. In order to achieve this, a need-based and focused planning along with functional strategies need to be evolved.

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