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## Sensibilities of the Stakeholders in RTE

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The right to education envisages the responsibility of many in ensuring that all children of the ages 6-14 years of age receive education in schools. For this goal to be realised, the onus lies on a number of individuals and groups in the schooling chain as it exists today. The RTE for the first time has dwelt upon governance of the school system at the level of each school and defined to some extent the role and the scope of all stakeholders in the school.

This requires each individual school to evolve and develop within the wider framework of the directives from appropriate government agencies. With this kind of evolving of each school and the stakeholders' autonomy, their resultant responsibility and accountability also become greater.

The first responsibility lies with the government agencies at different levels. Increasing enrolment, ensuring retention, curbing dropouts were always part of every thought, policy and

focus on elementary education. But these appeared more to be the points of focus for the decision makers, for the officialdom or the functionaries far from school, more in the consideration zone of the administrative and the higher academic discussions as in colleges of education and universities. **It is for the first time that all these activities have been brought into the actual language and terms of everyday understanding of the grassroot functionaries at the school level.**

'Compulsory education casts an obligation on the appropriate government to provide and ensure **admission, attendance and completion of elementary education.**' (RTE)

The RTE talks of the school's role in keeping a child in school till fourteen years of age. If we compare this to the earlier directives we see that this goes beyond enrolment. Retention of students and curbing dropouts is inbuilt in the Act.

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The RTE not only talks of compulsory education but also quality education, which means that the government authority will set up schools, by providing infrastructure, and also plan curriculum and its transaction by developing and enforcing standards of training of teachers and ---promoting innovations, researches, planning and capacity building. This means that students of 6 to 14 years of age are to be provided quality education by raising the quality of teacher.

The teacher has to undergo the maximum change in her sensibility. She has to understand that she is the pivot of the education system. This will come by accepting and promoting the independence of the teacher where she is not merely part of a herd but each with her own sensibility based on the unique position of her school based on its socio-economic and geo-political condition and the students placed under her charge. The administration must also treat the teacher not as a low level functionary in the government system with no say in decision making, but as a dynamic functionary capable of bringing about a change in the educational scenario of the nation.

All this would mean a different approach to training of teachers whether the training in teacher training institutes as pre-service training or the in-service teacher trainings organised later after the entry of teachers in schools.. The officers and higher level functionaries in education

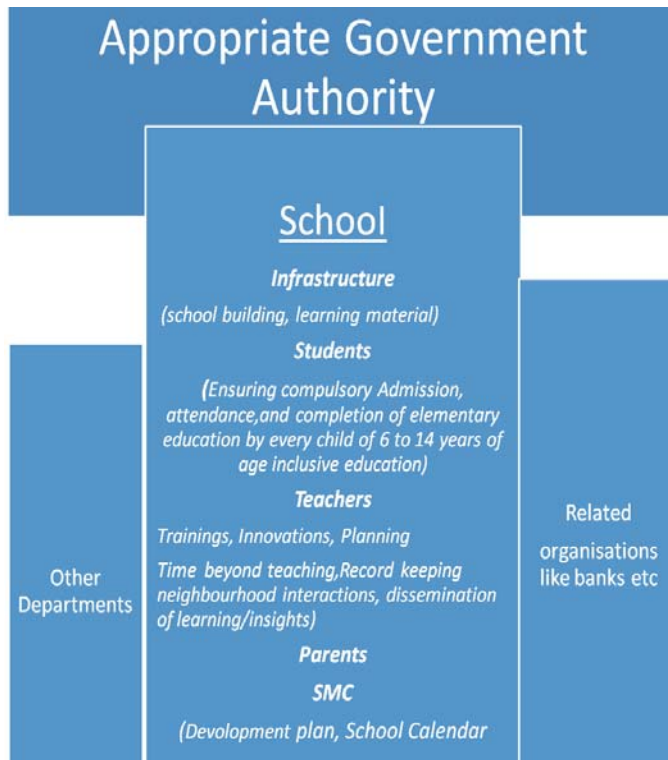
departments must also be people who have hands on experience of working in schools and are exposed to the ground level functioning.

The hub and the stage of RTE is not the conference of academicians or the offices of departments of education of different government authorities, but every elementary school and its every functionary and every stakeholder.

It also means that other related departments like the civil engineering and electric engineering work in tandem with education department and its needs. The school building, its plan, could include the teachers and the parents in spelling out their needs and requirements and any special change that they may want. Does it require extra money to paint the doors of a building red instead of grey? No! It only requires interest and concern on part of the school stakeholders and a sensitivity to their needs on part of the other government departments.

Institutions like banks have to understand the need for opening accounts in the names of children who would be the beneficiaries of direct cash transfers under various education schemes for children under the RTE. The parents are to be helped, individuals have to be educated about use of a bank and so on.

The one stakeholder whom the earlier documents/directives had never talked about was the parent. The RTE puts the responsibility of bringing every child to school on the



system but also to ensure that he is equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes and values by the time s/he leaves school. For all this, the duties and the responsibilities of the states, and the local bodies have been mentioned and defined.

We see that the RTE also brings in quality by talking of setting standards, in teaching, evaluation and deciding a school calendar. The School Management Committee (SMC) shall make development plans for the school. This means that the onus, the responsibility of appropriate action, the finer detailing is left to each

parent also and it is for the first time that voluntary participation of the parents is given a thought. It is almost like some of the initiatives taken in the field of health like the efforts put in making India polio free. The parent now has a very close and active role in ensuring the vision of RTE come true. The parents have an active role in the SMCs or the School Management Committees. Parents are therefore not only responsible for bringing a child to school, but also for thinking and planning the development of schools of their children.

The idea and the objective is not only to bring a child into the school

individual school. In the government sector at least this requires a new approach, where a school has to decide its own direction, its activity and calendar. A school calendar mirrors the total school activity schedule, the various dimensions of school activity. This making of the calendar would make the school stakeholders focus on the curriculum, and apportioning the timetable for promoting what the school holds in value.

This means that in each school, the school stakeholders do not merely follow the directives that come from the appropriate authority but also evolve as an institution themselves depending

on their needs and requirements and vision.

For developing a better vision, the definition of teacher's working hours to include time for preparation at the elementary level has perhaps been thought of for the first time. Batches of teachers are trained every year under one scheme or the other, but in the present set up there is no time for dissemination and assimilation of new ideas within each school itself.

The record keeping of each individual student from the time of his/her entry in school up till fourteen years of age would require extensive record maintenance and all this work will take time not only in record keeping but also working on it. It means using time beyond the teaching time and may require different teachers to discuss the student performances as a group in order to give comprehensive formative and summative assessment for improvement of teaching-learning strategies in general and in individualising instruction.

For the education departments it means redefining their post fixations and requirement of teachers with an understanding of the extent of record keeping by a teacher for each individual student. With states like Delhi where funds for development are directly transferred to schools, it becomes imperative for schools to plan judicious spending of it. What the schools really need is not only funds but also an orientation to plan

and develop each school as a complete unit. The vision of the teacher must not only dwell on teaching-learning but all things that help in improving teaching-learning, i.e., better infrastructure, teaching-learning aids, etc. Research and innovation by the teacher is also an area where schools have to think and work towards.

If the requirements of the RTE are to be met, we will have to think of decentralisation of recruitment of teachers, redefining of the role and the skills of a teacher, so that schools have the requisite number of teachers with a clear understanding of their work. We also have to think of not only teacher trainings, but also knowledge and skill sharing in a big way in neighbourhood schools.

As I understand it, the RTE is all about decentralised enterprise at all levels of school functioning and that requires a change in sensibilities of all stakeholders, especially, the functionaries in the government system. On the one hand it is about empowering the school level functionaries, making them realise their potential and involvement in the school at all levels in understanding and defining school vision, improving educational facility, standards and delivery and these functionaries taking responsibility of developing their own paths and missions in keeping with the national and local needs and ensuring that the demands of RTE are met.