

1. It is said that there are clauses in the RTE Act which have enormous catalytic potential but that have gone largely untouched and unnoticed. Discuss the features of these provisions which can radically transform school education in India. (250 Words)

Answer:

Background :-

Right to education act has played an important role in enabling the goal of universal primary education but at the same time its provisions are inadequately implemented.

Important RTE provisions which were neglected :-

RTE Act establishes that the onus to ensure free and compulsory education lies on the state. However, the compulsory and state liability part needs to be imbibed by the educational bureaucracy, which is now lacking.

Tracking dropouts and mainstreaming them into age-appropriate classes has been subsumed into existing scheme activities.

Even seven years after its enactment, there are still children on the streets.

The RTE Act prescribes basic minimum standards for a school such as provision for toilets, drinking water and classrooms.

Despite this provision there are still lack of toilet facilities and necessary infrastructure in the school system.

Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR):-

It is impractical to expect quality education without this.

33% of the schools in the country did not have the requisite number of teachers, as prescribed in the RTE norms

All other forward-looking provisions of the Act such as continuous assessment, a child learning at her own pace, and 'no detention' policy are contingent on a school with an adequate number of teachers.

No meaningful teaching-learning is possible unless trained teachers are physically present at school.

In States with an adequate overall number of teachers, their positioning or posting requires rationalisation according to the number of students.

However, teacher transfers remain a grey area in most States.

The academic calendar will be decided by the local authority. This provision recognises the vast cultural and regional diversities within the country. So if panchayats, perhaps at the district level, decide the working days and holidays, this would not only exponentially increase attendance and teaching-learning but also strengthen local panchayats to take ownership of their schools

However the educational bureaucracy has not allowed the decentralisation of academic schedules even in districts.

The excellent push towards school management committees that were to support governance at the school level had implementation issues since they had no powers, no funds and no support to train their members in governance.

It was an excellent idea to include local parents to watch over the schools their children attended but parents especially if less educated than teachers are often patronised or find it difficult to be heard. SO the school management structures were doomed .

Act claims to stand for all children but does not actually apply to all.

The intent of the Act may have been to acknowledge this principle by excluding madrasas, Vedic pathshalas and educational institutions providing primarily religious instruction in adherence to the articles 29 and 30 of the constitution.

There is much about inclusion for the disabled, but nothing for those whose schedules and abilities do not match with a traditional school timing regime like schools for children of construction workers that were run on-site were made illegal by this legislation

Suggestions:-

Strategies to ensure retention need to change from the earlier approach of enrolling the un-enrolled.

Teacher provisioning should be the first option to fund as no educationally developed country has built up a sound schooling foundation without a professionally-motivated teaching cadre in place.

Allow schools to admit students if there are no applicants in the 25% EWS category. As it stands, schools are forced to keep the place vacant and lose both fee revenues and compensation if they cannot find a poor student in their area.

The government has a responsibility to govern the administration of all schools to ensure quality education is being delivered to all. This does not need to impinge upon the content of teaching, while it does call to account the process of teaching and learning and its outcomes even regarding minority schools .

Conclusion:-

It is time to reform it in line with the key goal of a quality education for each and every child.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. The road to India's prosperity may well run through Jerusalem, but the road to its leadership aspirations on the world stage cannot bypass Ramallah either. Critically comment on the implications of recent inconsistency in India's policy towards Israel and Palestine for India's regional and global aspirations. (250 Words)
2. For India, among the largest food producers globally, the challenge is to counter the effects of erratic rainfall, raise productivity and use water efficiently. Examine how Indo-Israeli Agriculture Project (IIAP) seeks to address these challenges through technological interventions. (250 Words)