

Right to Education Act: Perceived Hurdles and providing awareness to mothers in Mysuru city, Karnataka state, India

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Abstract: The Right to Education (RTE) Act has been implemented across India making free and compulsory education as a Right of children between the age group 6 to 14 years of age. Under the provisions of the Act, even private unaided schools other than minority institutions, have to admit children up to 25% of total sanctioned seats, from under privileged sections of society. There is a need to educate the parents especially the mothers of children who need to get admitted to the schools about the provisions of the Act and how best they can use it for the benefit of their wards. The current study attempts to provide awareness to the mothers of children from under privileged sections of society about RTE Act through focus group discussion. The universe for the study was the City of Mysuru, Karnataka state. The sample frame included twenty Anganawadi centres located in Mysuru. The sample included the mothers of children who attended the anganawadi centres. The focus group discussion focused on the profile of mothers, the awareness about RTE Act among mothers, providing the information about RTE Act, the process of filing applications for the quota of seats under RTE Act, the decision making with regard to admitting their wards to Government or private schools, the perceived hurdles to admitting the children under RTE Act. 428 mothers participated in the focus group discussions. The result reveals that majority of mothers were house wives living in urban slums or peripheral areas of the cities, having education up to SSLC. The awareness about RTE Act was very less among the participants. The perceived hurdles included fear that the selection process may be favoring select few parents, difficulties in filing the application due to procurement of income certificate, caste certificate and providing address proof. Most of the mothers wanted their children to study in private English medium schools through reservation under RTE Act. Focus group discussion was successful in providing awareness to the mothers about the Right to Education Act.

Key words: *Right To Education Act; RTE Awareness; Perceived Hurdles; Mother's Perception*

I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The Government of India enacted the Right to Education Act, 2009 under Article 21A in the Indian constitution making Education a fundamental Right. The rules have been framed by the respective State governments with respect to implementation of the Act. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. Section 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act stipulates that 25% reservation of free seats for children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups (EWS) in all private unaided primary schools while admitting students to Class 1 (Tucker & Sahgal, 2012). It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children from poor families. The World Bank education specialist for India, Sam Carlson (2012), has observed: The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring school enrollment, attendance and completion on the Government. It is the parents' responsibility to send the children to schools in the U.S. and other countries.

UNESCO World Education scenario report (Carol Bellamy, 2000) highlights that the right to education was given way back in 1966 through the Covenant through the Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

For education to be a meaningful right it must be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (Tomasevski, 2004). The concept of these 4 As was developed by the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski, and it is one of the best ways to assess and act upon the situation. India has taken a step towards making the education reachable through the 4 As through the Right to Education Act. In order to make this Act reach the children to reap the benefits of the RTE Act, there must be proper mechanisms in place. As such good school infrastructure, able and committed teachers, concerned educational authorities and responsible parents are all necessary to provide education to the children.

Education, in the Indian constitution, is a concurrent issue and both centre and states can legislate on the issue. The RTE Act lays down specific responsibilities for the centre, state and local bodies for its implementation. In April 2010, the central government agreed to share the funding for implementing the law in the ratio of 65 to 35 between the centre and the states, and in the ratio of 90 to 10 for the north-eastern states.

Review of literature reveals that there have been a number of research studies that have looked into tracing the historical development of RTE Act and its implications as well as possible obstacles to implementing the Act (Pandey & Srivasthava, 2015). Study by Rameen Devi (2015) traces various schemes and programmes including the RTE Act initiated by the Indian Government to promote the enrolment and retention of girls, minorities, marginalized groups and children with special needs. Study by Rangaraju et al (2014) looked into private school situation in Bihar; Awareness about the RTE Act among the teachers was studied by a number of authors such as Mondal, 2015; Mandal & Barman, 2014; Gadam, 2013; Islam & Chakraborty, 2013; Dey & Beck, 2011; Kumar & Sharma, 2011; Vithalrao, 2011; Studies by Malik et al (2013), Fathima (2011), Dhanavendan & Vakkil (2015), Lal (2014) discuss the awareness about RTE Act among the those who are training to be teachers. Sarswati(2013) conducted a comparative study of private and government schools towards implementation of the RTE Act. The studies so far have been focusing on the school and teacher perspective about RTE Act. There is a need to study the awareness about RTE Act among the stakeholders namely the parents of the children who are eligible to take seats under RTE quota.

The RTE Act provides provision for admission of children between 6- 14 years of age to aided and unaided private schools in the neighborhood and provides reservation up to 25% of the total allotted seats to be kept for children from under privileged sections of the society.

The Right to Education Act, to be implemented in true spirit, requires the awareness about the act and its provisions among the care givers of the children of school going age. There is a need to educate the parents of disadvantaged sections of the society about the provisions of the Act to ensure admission under the Act to schools of their choice be it Government school/ aided school or unaided school. To ensure such participation, parental awareness programmes need to be undertaken. The current study proposed to conduct Awareness building programme in the city of Mysore.

Mothers play a very important role in enrollment, preparing the children to go to school on time, ensure regular attendance and completion of home work of the children. It is the mothers, who play a pivotal role in making sure the child's regular participation in the school. The mothers form major stake holder group in children's school enrollment. Hence it is absolutely important to bring the provisions of RTE Act to the attention of the Mothers. With these intentions in mind, the current study was undertaken.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study aims to measure the perceived hurdles in accessing primary education to the children and giving awareness to mothers of children who are in the school enrolment age and study the impact of the awareness giving process. The current study adopted a descriptive and interventionist research design to meet the aim. The study used focus group discussion with the mothers to facilitate the awareness building process about RTE Act.

Aim: To study the perceived hurdles in accessing the right to education and providing awareness to the parents of children enrolled in Anganavadi Centres about RTE Act.

Objectives:

1. To identify the method of school selection for elementary education by the mothers
2. To study the perceived hurdles in procuring admission to the elementary schools by the mothers of children who require admission to elementary school
3. To study the level of awareness among the mothers about the Right to education of their children and their awareness about Right to Education act, 2009
4. To give awareness about the RTE Act to the mothers of children enrolled to Anganawadis in the City of Mysore
5. To study the impact of giving awareness about RTE to the mothers

Materials & method:

In order to meet the study objectives, the Universe chosen for the study was the Mysuru city and the Anganawadis located in the city through the web site of Department of Women and Child Welfare. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme of the government of India has been providing services to children from 0- 6 years through Anganawadi centres. The services include nutritional supplementation, immunization, health checkups, preschool and non formal education etc. in both urban and rural areas

(<http://wcd.nic.in/icds.htm>). These centres cater to the needs of economically backward families, who can be benefitted by the RTE Act.

The study focused on the Anganawadi centres to identify the children in the age group of 3 ½ years to 6 years who would be eligible to get enrolled in formal schools for elementary education. The Total number of anganawadi centres in the city of Mysore formed the Universe for the study. The number of Anganawadi centres in the city of Mysore as listed in the Website of Dept. of Women and Child welfare is 196 (<http://dwcdkar.gov.in>). These 196 centres formed the Universe for the study. The mothers of Children who are enrolled in the anganawadi centres formed the sample frame for the respondents. The data pertaining to announcement of dates for filing applications under RTE and other related information was gathered from the official website of Department of Public Education- www.schooleducation.kar.Nic.in and from the reports given in two news papers namely Deccan Herald and Star of Mysore.

Ten percent of the total Anganawadi centres i.e 20 anganawadi centres formed the sample frame. Simple random sampling method was used to take representation of universe. Out of the 20 centres, the respondents were selected on the basis of availability and willingness of the mothers to take part in the awareness programme at the anganawadi centres.

In order to contact, visit and conduct the focus group discussion with the mothers at the Anganawadi, permission was obtained from the Deputy Director, Dept. of Women and Child Welfare, Mysuru. After obtaining the permission, the researcher associated with an NGO working with preschool children among Anganawadis in Mysuru namely **Child Fund India** and requested for their cooperation to fix the time for conduct of focus group discussion, with concurrence of the dates with respective Anganawadi workers. Every anganawadi conducts Mothers' Meeting once in a month to provide educational inputs to the mothers. The volunteers of Child Fund India, contacted the anganawadi workers of the identified Anganawadis in the city of Mysuru. The researcher prepared a format for collecting basic information/ profile of the participants.

Focus group discussion content:

Based on a review of the Right to Education Act, its rules and various books(Sharma, 2012; Baburaj, 2012) and journal articles (Pandey & Srivastava,2015; Rameen Devi, 2015), the content for providing information on Right to Education Act was prepared. The researcher prepared a format for the focus group discussion for the duration of 50 minutes. The salient features of the focus group discussion are as follows: Mutual introduction- 5 minutes; views of the participants on need for education- 5 minutes; views of the mothers with regard to choice and selection of schools for providing education to their wards- 5 minutes; sharing the information about the Right to Education Act- 10 minutes; choice for admission of children to various schools and concept of neighborhood school- 5 minutes; provision in RTE Act for admission of children to private schools through 25% reservation- 5 minutes; the procedure to apply for seats under RTE through online admission procedure- 10 minutes; perceived hurdles expressed by the participants and queries- 5 minutes.

The schedule for admission under RTE for the academic year 2015-16:

As per the order of the Department of Public Instruction circular dated 24.11.2014, the schedule for admission to the schools under RTE quota was as follows: Online/ offline application filing- 13.01.2015 to 14.02.2015; this schedule was revised and the process began from 18.01.2015 to 19.02.2015. Scrutiny of applications: 16.01.2015 to 16.02.2015. These dates were postponed to 27.02.2015 to 02.03.2015. Publishing of selected candidates: 28.02.2015, instead the date was postponed to 09.03.2015. Additional list: 07.03.2015. Admissions to begin by 10.03.2015 which was revised to 20.03.2015 vide order dated 17.12.2014. According to the news paper reports a total of 1,19,711 seats were available all over Karnataka under RTE for the academic year 2015-16 (Deccan Herald, 19. Jan.2015). The office of Deputy Director of Public Instruction(DDPI) along with the office of the District Planning Coordinator held a public interaction on Right To Education Act at Jaganmohan Palace Auditorium, Mysuru on 11.02.2015(Star of Mysore, 12.Feb.2015). The second round of admissions began on 20.04.2015 and the last date to get the children admitted was 30.04.2015(Deccan Herald, 21.04.2015).

The focus group discussions were held in the months of December 2014 to January 2015 with focus on admissions under RTE for the academic year 2015-16. Twenty focus group discussions were held at first phase, prior to and during the call for applications under RTE Act. During the year 2015-16, the government of Karnataka introduced Online application filling for the seats under RTE. The mothers were given the briefing on how to fill the applications in the online format. After a gap of one month, the researchers went to same Anganawadis to do a follow up group of the mothers to find out the number of applicants and how many

children got admission under RTE Act from the 20 Anganawadis. In this round of focus group discussion, 328 mothers took part which was held between 1.04.2015 to 23.04.2016.

The Process of focus group discussion:

During the first round of focus group discussion, there were a total of 428 participants from 20 Anganawadis. The minimum number of participants was in Anganawadi no.105 which had 14 participants and the maximum number of participants was from Anganawadi no.177 with 30 participants. The following information contains the gist of focus group discussion.

Views of the participants on need for education:

All of the participating mothers were equivocal in asserting that education was very important for children, irrespective of the gender of the child. The mothers were of the opinion that girl children also require education in today's world. Some mothers opined that many of them were married at a young age of 13-14 years. But they wanted their daughters to complete at least college education and they must be equipped to do jobs.

Views of the mothers with regard to choice and selection of schools for providing education to their wards:

The mothers told that they usually gathered information about the schools in the vicinity of their houses through neighbours and relatives. They brought this to the notice of their spouses. It would usually be a combined decision of both parents to admit the children to particular schools. Most of the mothers relied on their spouses to get the children admitted to the schools. They said preparing the children to get ready for the school was their job, getting the child admitted to school would be managed by the fathers.

Information about the Right to Education Act:

The information given on part of the researcher included informing the participants about the Right to Education as a fundamental Right of all children up to 14 years of age, the responsibility of parents, teachers and the community to identify all such children who are out of school to be brought to the notice of concerned educational authorities to be brought under formal schooling, to identify and rescue child laborers, inform child help line in case of child abuse and no corporal punishment to the children while learning. The provisions of the RTE Act pertaining to providing 25% reservation in Private- aided and unaided schools to children from underprivileged sections of society was explained in detail. The reservation for SC (7.5%), ST (1.5%) and others(16%) in the quota and the economically backward was highlighted. The Karnataka Government had fixed the annual income of the parents limit at Rs. 3.5 lakh (Maximum limit) for claiming the admission to the children under RTE Act quota under economically backward category.

The discussion here highlighted that the Government schools will give free education to all the children irrespective of the parental income and the advantages of admitting the children to Government schools. The mothers were of the view that the teaching in Government Schools was not good, the discipline was not maintained and that English medium schools provided better education and better future compared to Kannada medium taught in the Government schools. Given a chance, 99% of respondents wanted their children to study in Private English medium schools and not in Government schools. Many expressed the desire to send their children to reputed private schools which were far off from their place of stay.

Concept of neighborhood school:

The researcher's next focus was to familiarize the mothers with the concept of neighborhood school. The advantage for children to study at a school which was nearby to their home so that they can avoid the lengthy travel to a distant school, the difficulties of transportation and advantage of coming home early from the school and the stipulation of the RTE Act in terms of restricting the admission of child within the ward limits in the city area. Many mothers were unhappy with limitation of ward area as they expressed the view that their wards did not have English medium schools or there were only one or two schools hence there would be lot of competition for those schools. The mothers felt that they should have the option of applying for any school of their choice and not be limited to neighborhood schools. Some members told that such rule had not been followed during the first and second year of RTE admissions. So why the Government should introduce the rule now was the question.

Provision and Procedure for applying under RTE Act:

The researcher shared with the participants the procedure for off line and online application along with information pertaining to the documents to be enclosed. There were questions pertaining to the age of the child for pre school admission and admission to first standard. There were queries with regard to admission of

children under RTE to higher classes like seventh or eighth standard. Few mothers had questions about issue of Transfer certificates in case they decided to move from one place to another. The mothers took detailed note of the documents to be attached along with the application for seat under RTE Act. All the mothers except one had the birth certificates of their children. Mothers had questions with regard to proof of address as that would be the key issue in neighborhood school selection. They also wanted to know about how to procure caste and income certificate. The researcher further informed the mothers that the free seat means they do not have to pay the capitation fees or the tuition fees but the amount charged by the school for extracurricular activities, van charges, computer and other related fees as applicable to other students, extra text books etc have to be borne by the parents only.

The researcher distributed model application forms to the participants and also application forms were left with the Anganawadi workers so that they can also provide the required information and the application form to those mothers who were desirous of applying for admissions under RTE Act for their children. Further, the telephone helpline number as well as the website address for uploading the application was given to the participants.

Post group follow up:

The post group follow up was held between 1.04.2015 to 23.04.2015. The researchers went to the 20 Anganawadis to meet with the mothers to find out whether they had applied for admission to Private schools under RTE Act during that year. The researcher could meet mothers in only 18 Anganawadis as the Anganawadi workers in two Anganawadis were on long leave for personal reasons hence the mothers could not be intimated or asked to be present for the meeting. Among those who had come for the discussion, 17% of the participants had attended the previous session. It was found that most of the children were not coming to Anganawadis due to the summer season, their elder siblings were having holidays hence had gone out of station and many were wanting to get their children admitted to schools and had discontinued sending the children to anganawadi centres. The researcher addressed 328 mothers during the post group follow up. 73(17%) mothers from previous group had come for follow up discussion. Feedback from all the anganawadi workers about the admission process was gathered during the follow up study. During the follow up group, it was found that many mothers (255 mothers from 18 Anganawadis) wanted information on RTE as they had not attended the earlier group session. So the researcher briefed the mothers about the Right to Education Act, its provisions and the process for applying for their wards under RTE Act. Among those mothers who attended the post group session, many mothers reported that their children were not eligible due to the age criteria for admission for the current year and hence they had not applied for the seats under RTE quota.

III. RESULTS:

Back ground Information of the Mothers:

The results were gathered from the basic information provided by the participants and the content analysis of deliberations of focus group discussions. 75.5% mothers were in the age group of 21-30 years. 82.7% of respondents were Hindus of which 51% belonged to Scheduled castes and tribes. 17% respondents were Muslims and only 0.7% Christians. 96% of respondents were married, 2% were widowed and 0.5% was separated from their spouses. 84% of respondents were housewives, 15% held minor jobs such as household help, agarbatti making (Incense stick making), sweepers, garment factory work, tailoring etc. 58% of respondents were not members of any SHG groups. 42% of respondents were members of SHG groups. Among the mothers 13% were illiterates. 24% had primary education. 42% of respondents had studied up to high school and 18% of mothers had studied up to Pre University. The remaining mothers (22%) had studied up to graduation and two respondents had post graduate degrees to their credit.

The results revealed that during the first group, the mothers claimed that both parents played an important role in admitting their wards to the schools. But in post group session, it was revealed that most of the mothers relied on their spouses to do the actual work of getting their children admitted to the schools. Fathers played an important role in getting the children admitted to the schools and mothers played a secondary role in the admission procedure. The researcher noted that few of the mothers whose children had got admission to private schools under RTE quota had no idea what so ever with regard to how the online applications were filled or when the intimation about the seat allotment through mobile message came through and what documents were given to the school during the admission.

Perceived hurdles expressed by the participants and queries:

Sixty one percent of respondents took the model application form distributed by the researcher. Many women expressed apprehensions about the document for address proof as they did not have valid rental

agreements, their voter IDs were from the villages from where they had come to city via migration, there were shared electric meters, many did not have LPG connection and the Adhar address (Citizen Identification card) was that of some other rental house etc. Similarly, they were worried about getting caste and income certificates as many did not know as to how and from where they can get the certificates.

The mothers expressed concern with regard to where to go for filling the on line application and how much would it cost in a cybercafé to get the application filled up and sent. Some women told the researcher that they had approached nearby private schools about admission under RTE in the months of August, September and October, but the schools had refused to provide any details regarding the RTE Act. Some mothers told that few schools run by Christian missionaries had told them that the RTE Act was not applicable to their schools. The researcher clarified about the exemption given to minority institutions from RTE Act.

Another concern the mothers had was with regard to availing the benefits of Bhagyalakshmi scheme – a welfare scheme of providing insurance for girl child belonging to below poverty line. They wondered whether their daughters get the amount on reaching 18 years if they are admitted in private schools. Here the researcher clarified that the Bhagyalakshmi scheme ensures that the girl child should study till 18 years and the study certificate issued by the school head master is required and it need not be only from the government schools.

Few mothers clearly expressed their disappointment with on line applying procedure with these words “You say that the Act helps us to put our children in Good School. But how do we put our child’s application online? Say the child of a road construction worker, how will its mother access online application? Or for that matter, children of rural areas where there is so much power cut, how can they keep going to towns to fill up this application? Who will pay the money spent on these matters? How will any illiterate be able to do any of this? If the government really wants to help people, it must just allow us to give application by hand or by post. Simply making everything computer will cause more hardship for us people”. Many women of the group nodded consent to this outburst concurring with the lady and one of them philosophically summed up as “We the poor people must do the same rough work with no chance for betterment whether it was at the time of Rama or the Current Government. The same applies for our children too. They give seats to only those who are rich or those with influence to get these applications sent by computer”.

Among the 428 respondents, 67% had not heard of RTE Act and the remaining 33% had heard about the RTE Act. Among those who had heard about RTE, 46% reported that their knowledge was less than 25%, 25% had about 50% knowledge, 16% had about 75% knowledge about RTE Act and 12% reported that they had more than 75% knowledge about RTE Act. Thus it is revealed that there is not much awareness among the mothers of children going to Anganawadis about the RTE Act, even after five years of implementation.

The researcher used focus group discussion as a method to provide awareness about the RTE Act to the mothers of children enrolled to Anganawadis in the City of Mysore. This method was used as it gave the advantage of face to face interaction, providing a forum for mothers to discuss the educational path for their children, address their concerns and also clarifying the doubts. Involving the anganawadi workers in this process, gave the mothers an easily accessible person in case they needed to clarify any doubts. After the first group interaction, the researcher had gathered the contact numbers of all the twenty anganawadi workers. Many anganawadi workers called the researcher on behalf of the mothers to clarify the doubts with regard to admission process. The researcher could provide awareness about RTE Act to 428 mothers through focus group discussions during the first phase and to an additional 255 mothers during the follow up phase.

Follow up Group discussion:

The follow up of the groups conducted during the focus group discussion held between 2.12.2014 to 14.01.2015 was taken up between 1.04.2015 to 23.04.2015. Post group follow up revealed two aspects namely the impact of awareness giving and the practical difficulties encountered by the mothers in procuring seats under RTE Act during 2015-16 in the Mysore city. A total of 260(61%) respondents had collected the model applications circulated by the researcher. The post group follow up revealed that 73(17%) participants had attended the earlier session. Out of these 73, 67(16%) respondents had applied for seats under RTE Act. Out of these 67 applicants, 30(48%) children from these twenty Anganawadis had got seats in private educational institutions under RTE Act quota. The anganawadi workers reported that the number of applications put under RTE Act during the current year was far higher than the previous years.

According to the news paper reports, 16,574 applications were received in Mysuru district for 4,141 seats (Deccan Herald, 12. Feb.2015). Out of these 4,141 seat, 916 seats were under Mysuru north and 648 were under Mysuru South and 814 seats under Mysuru rural areas (Star of Mysore, 3 March 2015).

The follow up group had a mixture of mothers who had procured seats under RTE Act and those who could not get the admission. The mothers reported major problems in accessing online format and uploading the information as they had to depend on cybercafé personnel to do the job. Many times the power was not there

when they went to upload the information. There was difficulty in accessing the website. One lady reported that she failed to access the website during the six attempts she made, going to 3 different cyber centres and then with sheer frustration, she let go of the process. Two mothers reported that there was difficulty in procuring the caste and income certificates and one could not get the address proof as the Aadhar change of address did not come before the last date and till date it had not come!. The mothers also reported that the private schools, though they were instructed to collect the manually filled applications to upload the particulars, they had refused to do so and did not help the mothers in any way. Mothers and Anganawadi workers reported that the online application showed very few schools due to the ward limitation. In many wards, the children were eligible for LKG but there were no recognized schools for LKG in their ward and hence they could not procure seats. There was evident anger about limitation of ward in procuring admission to the children under RTE Act.

The anganawadi workers reported that many parents had expressed frustration with the online process, some were coughing up money to procure income and caste certificates at municipality. The anganawadi workers reported that they had given information about RTE after listening to the focus group discussion to many parents in the community whose children were attending to private schools. The anganawadi workers reported that the parents were unhappy about the postponement of dates by the Department which had led to confusion. The parents were also complaining about not getting the selection list as per the announced dates but faced delay of one or two days. Few mothers in the post discussion group asked the researcher whether they can apply for seats now, for which the researcher replied in negative and informed that they can try in the next year.

Few mothers and anganawadi workers gave a suggestion that children studying in Anganawadis should be given first preference while allotting the seats under RTE as they belong to the poor category. The anganawadi workers remarked that in Cities, parents preferred to send their wards to private pre schools despite the government benefits available through anganawadi centres. This trend can be reversed with reservation for children from Anganawadis under RTE Act.

IV. DISCUSSION

The review of literature showed few empirical studies on Awareness about the RTE Act among the teachers was studied by a number of authors namely Mondal, 2015; Mandal & Barman, 2014; Gadam, 2013; Islam & Chakraborty, 2013; Dey & Beck, 2011; Kumar & Sharma, 2011; Vithalrao, 2011; Studies by Malik et al (2013), Fathima (2011), Dhanavendan & Vakkil (2015), Lal(2014) discuss the awareness about RTE Act among the those who are training to be teachers. Except for the NGO IndusAction which undertook a campaign to enroll children of under privileged sections of society in Delhi since 2013 through project Ekalavya, there was not much report with respect to providing awareness to the parents on the RTE Act.

The Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka does give wide publicity through its official Web site and newspaper announcements to the general public on the schedule for admissions under RTE quota. But this information is available to literate parents only.

The schools themselves are one very reliable source through which the parents can get information about the admissions under RTE Act. But it was the experience shared by the participating mothers in the Focus group discussions that the Private schools were not eager to share any information with regard to admissions under RTE Act to the parents. Thus the parents from lower socio economic strata are indeed handicapped in terms of finding out the dates for applying for the seats under RTE quota.

The procurement of required certificates be it Caste/ Income certificate or address proof posed a challenge to the parents. The process of getting these certificates means going to the respective revenue offices, giving application in prescribed format, paying the fees and then following it up with the concerned official beurocracy.

All these factors indicate that so far the getting seats under RTE quota seems to be the privilege of parents who are capable of getting the newspaper information about RTE admission schedule, who have prepared the certificates in advance for applying, who know how to upload online applications. As pointed out by one participant, all these things can be done by the educated and moneyed people not the urban poor, rural poor or the tribal poor in that order.

The Right to Education Act is indeed a landmark Act aiming to provide education to all children. It is important to note that the provision of free and compulsory education in Government schools is not considered as quality education by many mothers as found in the current study. But access to admission to private schools under RTE quota for the underprivileged sections of society is not that easy as revealed by the current study. Though online processing of application can reduce the human factor in the process of lottery selection as well as clear documentation, this format is posing a challenge for many people from underprivileged background.

V. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

From the results, it is evident that focus group discussion served as an effective medium to effectively communicate information pertaining to Right To Education Act to mothers of children attending to Anganawadi centres in Mysore city. This method facilitates one to one interaction, easy to clarify the doubts and it is accessible to mothers as it is held at Anganawadi center which is in their neighborhood.

There is still not much awareness about RTE Act among the poorer sections of society and more awareness needs to be created to provide the benefits of RTE Act to the weaker sections of the society. There is some logic in the suggestion about giving preference to the children attending Anganawadis through RTE Act as usually the children attending to Anganawadis do belong to weaker sections of the society.

The Department of Public Instruction, which is the nodal agency for admissions under RTE Act needs to give more publicity to the process of admission and follow the strict schedule for admission and not postpone the dates as it causes the public to mistrust the process. The process of online application has its glitches which need to be fine tuned in the following years. The mothers expressed that access to applying online was difficult and cumbersome for many mothers among urban, rural and tribal areas. There should be an easy mechanism to upload the online application which needs to be examined by the Government, in order to make this process user friendly. The services of volunteers, seeking help from the Corporate Social Responsibility funds of local industries and expertise of IT industries can be used to facilitate this process.

The department of Public Instruction needs to examine the reason for loss of public confidence in the quality of education provided by the government schools very seriously and incorporate measures to negate the negative perception of people with regard to Government Schools. There is need for replication of this study across all districts and states of the country to identify the regional issues and disparities, iron out the difficulties so that every child get access to quality education.

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