



Mains Practice Question

Q. Right to Education Act, 2009 is a breakthrough in India's education landscape. Critically Examine. (250 words)

21 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Briefly introduce key provisions of RTE Act.
- Explain its significance.
- List some of the loopholes in the Act.
- Conclude by suggesting steps that need to be taken.

Introduction

Only 18% of Indians had basic literacy at the time of Independence and the transformative value of education in empowering entire generations, Right to Education Act, 2009 is a huge landmark as it has highlighted India's intent to invest in building a better future for its citizens.

Body

The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years. It mandates all private schools to reserve 25% of seats, absolutely free of cost, for children belonging to disadvantaged categories. The reservation is reimbursed by the State. It does away with the mandatory prior interview for the parents and any provision for donation or capitation fee. The Act makes it the State's responsibility to ensure social justice in society by mainstreaming the marginalised sections and ensuring equality of opportunity to learn and grow for children from all kinds of social structures.

Significance of the Act

- **Minimising the expense:** The free education provided under the Act also takes care of all other school expenses like uniforms, stationery, special educational material for children with disabilities.
- **Outcome-oriented:** Learning and education are taken to be a process and the provisions focus on outcomes of the implementation.
- **Education- a fundamental right:** It makes it the duty and obligation of the Government towards the people. It acts as an agent of inclusive growth in the country. It is a big leap from Article 45 (DPSP) which was not justiciable in court.
- **Transparency:** An external constitutional body is necessary to monitor the implementation of the Act which brings in transparency and accountability.
- **Holistic development:** It addresses the psychological and emotional issues of the children. It provides better social infrastructure and opportunity to develop and acts as a leveller.

Loopholes that Need to be Worked Upon

- **Implementation issues:** There remains a massive untapped enrolment potential in private schools with respect to the children from disadvantaged categories. Delays or non-payments of dues to schools by the State is a major reason for private schools' refusal to enrol these students.

- Lack of teachers affects pupil-teacher ratio mandated by RTE which in turn affects the quality of teaching.
- **Monitoring issues:** The implementation of the Act is not being monitored timely. This includes the space for corruption reflected in the recruitment of teachers with substandard qualifications.
- **Low public expenditure:** The extension of ICT enabled learning will require more public investment to reduce inequalities, particularly in Educationally Backward Blocks.
- **One Programme for All:** “Education for all” remains vulnerable to become “one programme for all” which can thwart innovations. The Act needs to incorporate diversity in the pedagogical approach to encourage local solutions to local problems.

Conclusion

Qualitative improvement in education is a much-needed outcome for India to remain competitive in the global sphere. The education policy needs to acknowledge that quality spans on a wide range of aspects ranging from the size of the school system, financial capabilities, strength of teachers’ unions, existing teacher capabilities and variability in performance across the State. RTE, as an important step towards skill development, needs to be accompanied by concerted efforts to raise the learning levels of rural and marginalised students for promoting equitable basis for employment and inclusive growth.

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