



## A Study on the Awareness of Equitable Quality in the Light of RTE Act '09 among In-Service School Teachers

### KEYWORDS

Diversified classroom, equitable quality, pedagogic approach, teacher-accountability.

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**ABSTRACT** *One of the primary objectives of Right of Children Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 is to ensure equitable quality in the classrooms. School education can't be separated from its social context, those who teach and learn, their attitudes, beliefs, habits and customs. The present experience of India with diversified classroom is not encouraging. The children from marginalized sections of society are being discriminated on the bases of gender, caste, and ethnicity. In this paper we have studied the awareness level of equitable quality cited in RTE act 2009 among in-service school teachers in three districts of West Bengal. The study revealed that the level of awareness among teachers included in this study is not encouraging.*

### Introduction

The destiny of a nation is shaped in her classrooms – this observation of the Kothari Commission (1964 – 66) is not an exaggeration when we consider the importance education holds in guiding a nation to desirable social change. In India, universal admission and retention of children to elementary education is yet a distant dream. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 has been duly passed in the Parliament; but it is not enough unless it is implemented in reality. The present experience of India with diversified classrooms is not encouraging. The concept of equity and equality of educational opportunities sometimes remain only in paper due to teachers' lack of awareness of or indifference to these concepts.

### Concept of equity

Equity is the state or condition of being fair, the idea that all individuals should be treated according to their needs and merits. In education, it is connected to the idea that the student's needs and abilities should be taken into account in designing educational programmes. The term refers to the fairness of education and whether or not all participating stake holders – male, female and various population groups – receive the same benefits. Equity is often connected to the idea of equality of educational opportunities – the idea that schools should serve the function of giving all students the same chances for success in life (The Greenwood Dictionary of Education, 2003). The concept of equity in education can be achieved by pursuing the policy of protective discrimination in favour of the disadvantaged section of the society. In this sense, most of the developing countries of the world including India have set equity as a major goal of educational policy.

### RTE Act, 2009 on Equitable Classroom

Millions of children in India are impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, discriminated against and neglected. For them, life is a daily struggle to survive. Since 1924, when the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration of the 'Rights of the Child', the international community has made a series of firm commitments to children to ensure that their rights to health, education and survival, among others, are met. Meeting of the Millennium Development Goals (2000) dreamt of transforming the lives of millions of children as they gain access to complete schooling and ensure the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. As a signatory to this human rights treaty, India can not deny the pledge of the MDG.

Today 18 crore children in India are taught by a 57 lakh teachers in more than 12 lakh primary and upper primary schools. Over 98% of our children are supposed to have access to primary schools and 92% to upper primary schools. This notable physical access, however, has not been supported by satisfactory curricular intervention including teaching-learning materials, training designs, assessment systems and classroom practices. An alarming 46% of children, largely girls, SC, ST and other disadvantaged group children drop out before completing the elementary education. So the situation demanded to take a firm decision so that all children, irrespective of their religion, caste, creed, class, gender and location get an education of equitable quality.

RTE Act envisages heterogeneous classrooms where all students have equitable access to grade-appropriate and intellectually challenging curriculum, productive interactions with the teacher and equal – status interactions with peers. In such a classroom students display their skills, talents and understanding of the content. This Act, by making all private aided and unaided schools comply with 25% reservation for the disadvantaged children, seeks to strengthen the social fabric of our democracy. This Act provides justiciable legal framework that entitles all children between the ages of 6 – 14 years to an education of reasonable quality, based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. The RTE Act reminds us that this notion of 'merit' decided by screening test of the children is actually connected to social advantage. Children who come from disadvantaged background need greater attention and the best academic support to promote equitable quality. The report of the Yash Pal Committee – 'Learning Without Burden' (1993) had pointed out that the educational burden resulted from bombarding the children with information that they could not understand at that age. RTE Act attempts to redress this issue.

### Teacher's Role to Promote Equitable Quality

National Knowledge Commission (2007) in its report held that teachers are the single-most important factor in school education system. It is well known that the quality and extent of learners' achievement are determined primarily by teacher-competence, sensitivity and motivation. In order to develop the future citizens of our land, who promote equitable and sustainable development for all sections of society, it is necessary that they be educated through perspective of gender equity, values for peace and respect for the rights of their fellow citizens. For this, teachers need to be equipped to understand these issues and incorporate them in their teaching. To realize the goals of equitable quality, teachers should have awareness of the child – centric provisions as

mentioned in the RTE Act.

**Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the present study are as follows:-

1. To study the awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their gender.
2. To study the awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their demography.
3. To study the awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect their subject stream.

**Hypothesis**

In the light of the objectives, the following Hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is no significant difference in awareness of student-teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their gender.
2. There is no significant difference in awareness of student-teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their demographic location.
3. There is no significant difference in awareness of student -teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their subject stream.

**Sampling technique**

We have taken a sample of 265 in-service secondary level school teachers from the districts of Murshidabad, Nadia and Purulia in West Bengal. In selecting the respondents from B. Ed. course for the study, a simple random sampling technique was utilized. A list of all in-service student-teachers from the selected teacher training institutions of respective districts was obtained. The list was numbered (1) and (2) and those who had (1) against their names were selected for the study.

**Table – 1: Sample profile**

Serial No	Student teacher category	Number	Total sample
1	MALE	140	265
2	FEMALE	125	
3	URBAN	124	
4	RURAL	141	
5	SCIENCE STREAM	99	
6	NON SCIENCE STREAM	166	

**Instrumentation**

The approach to this part of the research was quantitative and involved the administration of a questionnaire. Information was elicited about the awareness of student-teachers towards the equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09. The instrument was designed in multiple choice formats where the participants were asked to indicate the correct answer from four alternatives. The items were general in nature, but they related mostly to student-teachers' perception about age-appropriate syllabi, inclusive classroom, continuous and comprehensive evaluation, textbook production reform, pedagogic approaches for better learning. Additionally, the items were developed from the literature reviewed that identified common perceptions, attributes and factors behind positive and negative perceptions. The instrument covered a range of themes about the knowledge of teaching children with special educational needs, perceptions of student-teachers towards the concept of inclusion and types of disability that can influence student-teachers' awareness and acceptance. The Cronbach reliability co-efficient on the overall scale measured 0.77.

**Procedures**

Questionnaires were administered personally on the selected participants by the authors. Having employed the selection procedure described previously, authors distributed the questionnaires after the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents.

**Data Analysis**

As the study intends to find out the awareness of student-teachers towards the equitable quality, the responses from the questionnaire were analyzed and 't'-test was used to find out the differences of their awareness with respect to their gender, academic and demographic background.

**Table 2: Differences in awareness of student -teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their gender**

Category	N	Mean (%)	S.D.	Mean-Difference	d <sub>f</sub>	't'- value
Male	140	34.27	11.90	7.3	263	5.40**
Female	125	26.97	11.0			

\*\* significant at 0.05 level

**Table 3: Differences in awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their demography**

Category	N	Mean (%)	S.D.	Mean-Difference	d <sub>f</sub>	't'- value
Urban	124	30.22	11.42	1.76	263	1.06
Rural	141	32.08	11.67			

**Table 4: Differences in awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their subject stream**

Category	N	Mean (%)	S.D.	Mean-Difference	d <sub>f</sub>	't'- value
Science	99	31.43	11.62	0.45	263	0.67
Non-science	166	30.98	11.84			

**Result**

1. A significant difference in awareness of student-teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their gender is found. 't' value indicates a significant difference among them.
2. No significant difference is found in awareness of student-teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their demographic location.
3. Again no significant difference is observed from the 't' value in awareness of student- teachers towards equitable quality in the light of RTE act'09 with respect to their subject stream.

**Conclusion**

Deducing from the results, it can be said that this study has demonstrated the possibility of reducing the barriers that are created as a result of the in-service student teachers' low knowledge about equitable equality. This would be achieved through a coordinated effort of a series of pre-service or in-service training, conferences and professional development activities. It is important that teachers' attitude and awareness towards equitable quality are studied in-depth on regular basis. Increased importance should be placed in helping student- teachers to establish a fuller understanding of the philosophy of equitable quality and in developing teaching strategies that support ways to take full account to sameness, while paying attention to differences and diversity among students.

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