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## Perception of students about Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act-2009 in Tribal Areas of Odisha

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### ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to know the students perception towards effective implementation of Right to Education Act in Tribal Areas of Odisha. In this study, the investigator used a survey method by which Kandhamala District in Odisha was taken as a population. Out of 12 blocks in Kandhamala District, 04 blocks were selected randomly. From each blocks 10 elementary schools were selected. From each school 6 to 8 students from class VI, VII and VIII were selected purposively for Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). With the help of this tool, information regarding free and compulsory education, provisions of RCFCE Act, methods, teachers' activities, physical punishment, pass-fail system and SMC meeting held in the school were discussed and their views were collected. The result of the study revealed that almost all schools provide school uniform, textbook and uniforms in free of cost. Majority of students express that separate toilet for boys and girls are available in all most all schools but not in usable condition. All the respondents viewed that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in classroom. Special training was not given to the students those who are admitted under the age appropriate category.

**Keywords:** Perception, Tribal Areas, RCFCE Act, 2009

### INTRODUCTION

Students play the vital role in the teaching learning process. Govt. will take a lot of initiatives to provide quality education to students. In the year 2010, Govt. has implemented the RTE Act to provide free and compulsory education to all children upto the age group of 6 to 14 years. The RTE Act is revolving around the quality education for children, retention of students and reduction of

dropout rates of a student that has been set as a main part in the provisions. Students perception is very much importance to know the proper implementation of RTE Act. Keeping in mind, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students of class 6 to 8 were conducted to collect the useful information regarding various facilities and quality of education towards successful implementation of RTE Act.

### **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

As per the census 2011, the total literacy rate of Odisha is 73.45 which is nearer to our country literacy rate i.e.74.05. But the literacy rate of the people of tribal areas of Odisha is only 52.2 which is less than the country average of tribal literacy i.e. 58.96. The state literacy rate of tribal people is only 52.2 with a difference of 21.25 which is quite large. The Govt. has taken a lot of initiatives to improve the literacy rate throughout the country. The Govt. has implemented RTE Act to provide quality and free education to all children. But the research study conducted by Balmiki (2018) found that 83.62 percent of the students of secondary schools of Sikkim believed that teacher always tell us to memorize the lesson by heart so that we can easily recall it in future. The study further revealed that till now rote memory is emphasized in the classrooms and 43 percent of the students of secondary schools of Sikkim stated that their teachers take private tuitions which is against the norms of the RTE Act. Subramonian & Suprabha (2015) said that there is a significant difference in teacher educators perception towards Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 and its dimensions with respect to their gender, domicile, and medium of instruction

Most of the state RTE Act has not been implemented in the way it should have been, particularly in remote and tribal areas. Students views are not given too importance for effective implementation of RTE Act. Studies have been conducted on implementation of RTE Act related to different dimensions like admission process (Mishra,2011), Pupil-teacher ratio (Sharma & Saini, 2012), Implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009 in rural areas (Das,2014),awareness of stakeholders (Sarvapalli, 2012, Lal, 2014, Manju, 2015, Mandal & Barman, 2014, Kumari & Alam, 2014), children with disabilities (Soni, 2013), effective monitoring and implementation (Abbas, 2014), Attitude towards RTE Act, (Mandal & Barman, 2014), need of teacher training program on right to education act. (Krishnarao & Mangesh, 2015).

However, the investigator came across contradictory findings while reviewing literature on perception of students about RTE Act in relation to Material Received in Free of Cost, Infrastructure Facilities in School, Methods of Teaching, Appointment of Subject Teacher, Availability and Use of TLMs, Teachers Regularity and Punctuality, Medium of Instruction, Admission Procedure, Pass and Fail System, Physical Punishment and Mental Harassment, Involvement of Parents in School Activities. There is lack of studies particularly, related to perception of parents about RTE Act in tribal areas of Odisha. Hence the investigator was keened to undertake a study to address the following broad research question.

- What is the overall perception of students towards RTE ACT, 2009 in tribal Areas of Odisha?

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To study the perception of students about implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 in tribal areas of Odisha.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

H1 – Overall perception of students about implementation of RTE Act, 2009 is positive.

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## METHODOLOGY

**Design:** The researcher had used survey method to conduct the present study. Descriptive research design was used in the study.

**Population:** Population of the present study comprises of all the elementary schools of tribal areas of Odisha. Target population is restricted to all the elementary schools of Kandhamal district of Odisha and the accessible population is 04 blocks of Kandhamal district out of 12 blocks.

**Sample:** Out of 12 blocks in Kandhamal district, 04 blocks were selected randomly for the present study. From each blocks 10 elementary schools were selected randomly. From each school 6 to 8 students from class VI, VII and VIII were selected purposively for Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). Total number of students participate in FGD were 304 as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of students participating in focus group discussion**

Sl. No.	Block	Total number of schools	Total no. of students		Total
			Boys	Girls	
1	Phulbani	10	45	28	73
2	Khajuripada	10	40	38	78
3	Chakapada	10	54	27	81
4	Tikabali	10	24	48	72
Total	04	40	163	141	304

**Tool: Guideline for Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** with students was used to collect the relevant data from the students. This tool was intended for students to elicit their views on implementation of RCFCE Act, 2009 and its functional aspects in their schools.

## RESULTS

This report is based on 40 (forty) focus group discussion organized with the students of upper-primary, primary and elementary schools of four sampled blocks of Kandhamal district. The investigator was conducted FGDs with the students of class ranging from VI to VIII. The perception of elementary school children, with reference to objective of the study were gathered through conducting FGDs with students. The outcomes are presented below.

### **Material Received in Free of Cost**

RCFCE Act stipulates that students should be provided some material like school uniform, text book, mid-day-meal in free of cost. Results obtained from FGDs present not so encouraging picture about the successful implementation of RTE Act in tribal areas of Odisha. In most of the FGDs students' perceptions were same. When the investigator initiated the discussion related to free provisions of Mid-Day-Meal, text books, uniforms and other facilities, most of the students said that, school uniforms, textbooks and MDM are provided to them. Very few schools provided tray, geometry box, scholarship and note books to the students free of cost. SC/ST girls receive scholarship of Rs. 200 each per year, while SC/ST boys receive Rs. 150 each per year. Only in one school, student respondents said that class VI and VII students are provided with a geometric box free of cost. Some respondents said that they received two pairs of uniform; other said that they received only one pair of uniform per year in free of cost. The result indicates that some school violates the rule of RTE Act. They don't implement the RTE Act whole heartily. During the FGDs some respondent said that they

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face lot of problems in getting course materials like the text books. The school authority provide old books instead of new books and all most all the time books are provided to the students at the middle of the academic session and the uniforms which are provided to the students are low in quality.

### **Infrastructure Facilities in School**

When the investigator initiated the discussion related to the different facilities available in school such as classroom, toilet for boys and girls, drinking water etc. They said that separate toilet for boys and girls are available in almost all schools, but in many schools it was not in usable condition. They go the outside field for toilet. Safe and adequate drinking water facilities were not available in all schools. All most all schools use tube well for drinking purpose and few school used filter for drinking the water, which is not sufficient to all. Play ground, library, play materials, teaching learning materials, boundary walls and first aid box were not available in many schools which affect the quality teaching learning process. During the discussion and observation it was clear that Ramps were available for CWSN children but it was only usable in few schools and rest are in dangerous for users. Few CWSN children opined that special care have taken by the Block Resource Teacher like health Check up , providing teaching learning materials in free of cost and also arrange stipend facilities. In four to five school respondent were told that hand wash and sitting facilities every day to the students at the time of MDM.

Box- 1. : Student's View

✓ *In a single school the respondents said that proper sitting arrangement and hand wash programme for all students provided at the time of mid day meal in every day.*

### **Methods of Teaching**

When the investigator initiated the discussion related to the methods and techniques of assessment. *RTE Act says that, the student's progress should be evaluated through CCE pattern.* But in the present investigation almost all the students said that written and oral techniques were used for all subject. Check list, rating scale and anecdotal records were not used. Few schools have given project work (mostly in science and mathematics subjects), assignment and homework to all students. They also said that evaluation was conducted only two times in every school i.e. half yearly and annual. Respondents also opined that a few school conducted unit test and other were not followed the appropriate methods and techniques, which violate the RTE Act.

### **Appointment of Subject Teacher**

When the investigator discussed with the students about subject wise teacher at upper primary stage and the teachers teaching procedure, in most of the schools respondents said that no subject teacher is available in their school. They were facing a lot of problems during their teaching learning process basically in mathematics, science, Sanskrit and Hindi subjects. Present non subject teachers were unable to clarify their doubts particularly in math and science subject. Art and physical teacher was not available in all schools. Students were practising drawing in their own way. Physical education like yoga, drill and exercise we conducted in few schools only at Saturday. Whereas respondents views that work education was conducted through gardening work. Drawing and painting competition were conducted among students on behalf of ground water and forest dept. in few schools.

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### ***Availability and Use of TLMs***

Answering to the questions related with the use of TLMs, most of the participant said that only at a few occasion (like visiting of DEO, BEO, CRCC etc.) the teachers use the TLMs. The respondent said that most of the teachers used black board and chalk frequently. However a few science teachers have made effort in preparing teaching aids with the help of some house hold and easily available things. Nearly half of the teachers used some math and science kits. As far the social science subject is concerned teachers were used the readymade TLMs like, maps globes charts etc. As told by the respondent but the investigator observed in one school that the teacher used computer to show some science related games.

#### **Box- 2: Observation**

✓ *It was observed that only in one sampled school teacher used computer as TLMs at elementary level.*

### ***Teachers Regularity and Punctuality***

When the investigator discussed with the students about the teachers regularity and punctuality, all most all the respondents told that teachers were coming to school regularly and always maintain punctuality. But in few schools, respondents told that teachers were not coming to school in proper time. They were come in a rotation basis. Saturday almost all teachers were absent. They were not taking the class regularly. They also pointed out that after recess; teachers were not taken the class. When the investigator visited the school, observed that, some schools were not opened still 10.30 am and many teachers were absent due to training programme.

### ***Medium of Instruction***

Around 90% school, teachers were used mother tongue (odia) as medium of instruction to deliver the topic. But few teachers were used Odia as well as local language like “KUI” to teach the tribal students. So, other language like Hindi, English and Sanskrit are neglected and they have very poor in it.

#### **Box- 3: Medium of Instruction**

✓ *Only two schools respondents said that the local language “Kui” should be medium of instruction in tribal areas of Odisha.*

### ***Admission Procedure***

The investigator discussed with the respondent about age appropriate admission in school. Three to four respondents said that, they had directly admitted in class two, but special training was not provided to them. They learn like the other students in the classroom and no proper training or care were taken for him. As par the RTE Act is concerned, it says that child should be admitted to age appropriate category and should be given special training to able her/him to come at par with other classmate within a time frame ranging from three months to two years. It is clear that some extent it is not properly implemented in tribal areas of Odisha.

### ***Pass and Fail System***

Answering to the questions related to pass fail system. Most of the rigorous and good students viewed that, the pass fail system should be implemented as it creates interest among the learner towards learning. After discussed with respondent it was clear that few students continue their

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education in a single class more than one year due to parents unwilling for promotion to next higher class, lack of study habits, poor result, and bad health condition of the learners etc. One incident was marked in Tikabali block of Kandhamal district that one student was held back in one class due to change of his age in certificate. In some school, respondent viewed that parents forced to keep their children in a single class for more than one year. But RTE Act, 2009 says that no child will be failed or expelled in any class till the completion of elementary education by any school. From the above point it is clear that some school disobey the act and authority was not taken any initiative steps.

### ***Physical Punishment and Mental Harassment***

When the investigator initiated the discussion related to know the physical punishment and mental harassment given by the teacher, respondents said that around one third of the teachers sometimes use praise words for students. In two of the FGD conducted at upper primary school of Chakapada block said that, “teacher encouraged us in study but sometimes scold too”. In four to five FGDs instance of physical abuse or corporal punishment by teachers is reported by students. The mode of giving punishment in classroom by the teacher is different like scolding the children, using harsh words and loud voice, to keep them standing out the classroom, lean down etc. In two FGDs it was reported that the students was beaten up by his teacher, but they have not informed about it to his higher authority. Few respondents viewed that physical punishment is essential for wicked students and better study habits. Whereas RTE Act, 2009 says that no child should be subject to physical punishment or mental harassment. Any child subject to physical punishment or mental harassment can approach SMC, Local Authority, SCPCR, NCPCR one after another or directly to any of these body till achieving justice.

### ***Involvement of Parents in School Activities***

Answering to the question related to parents involvement in school activity and visiting of parents to school, almost all the respondents said that their parents visited the school at the time of publication of annual examination. Few parents came to school to participate in the SMC and PTA meeting. No parents will come to observe the quality of mid-day meal and teaching learning process. They are not involved in school development activities or plan.

### **STUDENT’S SUGGESTIONS**

At the time of FGDs with respondents they suggested the following points which will be helpful to them for providing better education.

- Appointment of more teachers
- Specific subject teacher at upper-primary level.
- Special trained teacher for CWSN students.
- Computer education to students.
- Remedial class for low achiever.
- Practical based teaching, group discussion in classroom practices.
- More home work on Math and Science subject.
- Electricity facilities in all classrooms.
- Separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.
- More teaching aids and materials for science, math and geography and also more playing materials.
- Study tour and picnic at the end of academic session.

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**Box-4: student's View**

*One respondent suggested that proper correction of error by teacher helps in our learning progress.*

**FIELD OBSERVATION**

On the basis of 40 focus group discussion it was clear that the Govt. was taken a lot of initiatives for effective implementation of Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 but till date the benefits of RTE Act, 2009 is not reached in the tribal schools of Kandhamal district of Odisha. It is matter of serious concern that where the lacuna is? Why it is properly implemented? What are the problems and barriers of implementation of RTE Act, 2009? It poses question to Govt. as well as administrators and to those who have the responsible of its successful implementation and monitoring (DEO, BEOs, DPC, ABEO, CRCC, headmaster, Teachers and Parents). After all it is clearly point out that awareness among teachers, students and students are essential for effective implementation of this historical act in tribal district in Odisha.

**MAJOR FINDINGS OF FGDs**

The major outcomes of the FGDs are listed below:

- a) Almost all schools provide school uniform, textbook and uniforms in free of cost.
- b) Students are facing a lot of problems in order to getting the text books. They got the old books instead of new books at the mid period of academic section.
- c) Majority of students express that separate toilet for boys and girls are available in most of schools but not in usable condition.
- d) Majority of students expressed that play ground is not available in most of schools.
- e) Classroom blackboards are not in proper condition for using in maximum schools but it used frequently by the teachers to write down the answers given by the students.
- f) Ramps were available for CWSNs children but it was only usable in few schools.
- g) All most all schools followed written and oral techniques to assess the performance of students but only one school maintain the anecdotal record of the students.
- h) In few schools specific subject teachers are available at upper-primary level.
- i) Blackboard used by teachers in all most all schools to write the name of the topic and important points while teaching but in few schools the teachers are used chart, maps, models, science and math kits and other teaching aids and materials.
- j) Most of respondents said that teachers maintain regularity and punctuality in school as well as in classroom.
- k) All the respondents viewed that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in classroom.
- l) Special training was not given to the students those who are admitted under the age appropriate category.
- m) The students are allowed to share their own experiences in the class for better learning; sometimes the students participate and feel free to give suggestions on the topic.
- n) Pass fail system was abolished in all the elementary schools of Kandhamal District.

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- o) Few students told that teachers punished sometimes due to lack of study habits but majority of students reported not to be afraid of their teachers in asking questions related to lessons and interacting with them.
- p) Most of the parents visit the school at the time of publication of annual result but few parents are participated in PTA and SMCs meeting.
- q) For improving the quality of teaching-learning process, it is necessary to appoint adequate number of teachers.
- r) Home works, class works are assigned on the topics taught in the class. Oral questions are asked for assessing the understanding level of the students on the topic taught.
- s) Teachers seem to be more active for maintaining the school environment and cleanliness on students.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section presents the results and discusses the findings as per the research questions. The research question stated as what is the overall perception of students towards RTE ACT, 2009 in tribal Areas of Odisha? The data revealed that school uniforms, textbooks and MDM are provided to them. This findings is in similar with the findings of (Sony, 2013, Mohalik,2013)Very few schools provided tray, geometry box, scholarship and note books to the students free of cost. It is also found that The school authority provide old books instead of new books and all most all the time books are provided to the students at the middle of the academic session and the uniforms which are provided to the students are low in quality. Infrastructure Facilities in School is concerned separate toilet for boys and girls are available in almost all schools, but in many schools it was not in usable condition. All most all schools use tube well for drinking purpose and few school used filter for drinking the water, which is not sufficient to all. But this findings is in contradictory with the findings of Mohalik, (2013) stated that 90.62% of school has safe drinking water. Play ground, library, play materials, teaching learning materials, boundary walls and first aid box were not available in many schools which affect the quality teaching learning process. Around 90% school, teachers were used mother tongue (odia) as medium of instruction to deliver the topic. (Krishnarao & Mangesh, 2015). Most of the rigorous and good students viewed that, the pass fail system should be implemented as it creates interest among the learner towards learning. In four to five FGDs instance of physical abuse or corporal punishment by teachers is reported by students. Few respondents viewed that physical punishment is essential for wicked students and better study habits. The same result is found in the study conducted by (Balmiki,2018) Whereas RTE Act, 2009 says that no child should be subject to physical punishment or mental harassment. Almost all the respondents said that their parents visited the school at the time of publication of annual examination. Few parents came to school to participate in the SMC and PTA meeting.

## **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

All the outcomes of the study related to perception of students towards implementation of RTE Act, 2009 have immense implications for the teachers, parents, govt. authority and policy makers/ administrators. The possible Educational outcomes of present study will have much importance in the present day context as there is a growing focus on right of every child to free and compulsory education up to the age of 6 to 14 years. The implications are:

- Provision of RTE Act, 2009 said that special training should be provided to the CWSN students and age appropriate admitted students but many schools were not provided training so, special care should be taken by the school authority to provide training.

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- It is found that separate toilet facilities are available in most of the school but it is not usable condition. So schools take the initiative steps to repair the toilet as well as water connection to it.
- Physical punishment was banned after implementation of RTE act but in present study it is found that few schools violate the norms of RTE act and give physical punishment to the students. So the authority should be conscious about it.

## **CONCLUSION**

FGDs were conducted with students to know the real practice of RTE Act. On the basis of FGD we can conclude that, in Kandhamal District, the tribal areas of Odisha, there are many major issues and problems in the field of tribal education as reported by the students. There are certain villages in tribal areas which are very remote and the tribes inhabit in the forests in a scattered manner. Tribal habitations remain separated from each other by some physical barriers like rivers, nalas and forests. The density of population is thin. There are very few school going children. Hence, Govt. has not opened schools in these areas. Some of the schools are merged with nearby schools. So, children in these areas are deprived from their fundamental right of education. If we want an inclusive and egalitarian society, number should not be the parameter for providing education. Govt. should rethink over this policy of withdrawing schools from remote location where enrolment is few. If some problems in the field of RTE Act can be solved by the authority like DEO, BEO, DPC, ABEO, CRCC and Headmasters and cooperation with each other as well as with concerned local parents, then RTE Act can be successfully implemented.

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