LET'S MAKE TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS EFFECTIVE THROUGH ACTIVITIES, DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION IN A CHILD FRIENDLY AND CHILD CENTERED MANNER

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Abstract

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 emphasizes on Every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have the right to free and compulsory education in the neighborhood school till the completion of elementary education. The RTE Act focused on every school and teacher to be child friendly and promote child centered teaching learning processes with ample freedom of expression for every child to learn and develop to full potential. Section 29 0f the Act clearly mentioned as about child centric and child friendly Schools. So it is essential for every teacher, child and member of school management committee (SMC) to make own school and society RTE compliant, which would take care of the rights of every child irrespective of her or, his background and education levels.

Keywords

RTE-Right to Education, SMC- School Management Committee, CFS- Child Friendly School, Children, Parents, Schools, Teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

RTE Act implementation is the responsibility of Government of India, Government of Maharashtra and Local Authority(Zilla Parishad, Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, Cantonment Board etc. All schools have to be RTE compliant with certain key indicators of RTE

compliance and prepare self and the system accordingly. It requires conscious effort by everybody concerned with children's lives. This is a pretty challenging thing in a society where public schools have been managed by officers and teachers for years using textbooks and examination driven teaching processes without much emphasis on role of local communities in school management and on all students' learning! In this critical situation, shifting towards a community based school management and emphasis on every child's learning and holistic development calls for a lot of collective efforts and a good understanding at every level of the new approach. SMC has to be constituted in all the schools as per section of 21 in the RTE Act 2009 which comprising 75% parents of students studying in the schools. On April 1, 2010, the government of Maharashtra took a very important step towards universalisation of quality elementary education by bringing into effect the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. A set of Rules to ensure smooth admission process, prevent corporal punishment and other such crucial issues was also framed to support the RTE Act. Maharashtra was also the first state to bring into effect Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation in all schools in keeping with the RTE Act. These developments have naturally thrown up discussion and debate on many traditional problems in our education system. In any sector, a law certainly gives immense impetus to the process of change, but change cannot come by law alone. Society needs to debate and accept the change, and situations need to be created that make the implementation of the law more effective. The education sector is no exception. The RTE Act will ensure that all eligible children, including those who have remained out of school, will be enrolled in a nearby school. But even if children are physically present in school it does not follow that they are there in spirit too. Forming bonds of affection with the teacher, the school, their books, and the whole enterprise of education, are essential for this. Only then will the process of education happen. This is the challenge. Many schools have on their own initiative implemented programs and activities that create a child-friendly atmosphere. But many others are still unattractive, uninteresting spaces for children. Perhaps physical punishment has stopped, but minds and hearts are still fettered. A study of 100 schools in 10 districts by Edcil, entitled "Time on Task" looked at how children spent their time in school had much the same outcomes. Children are not joyfully engaged in the educational process.

2. **Key role and responsibility of SMC**:

Major roles and responsibilities of SMC members prescribed in the Acts are as mentioned below.

- Monitor the working of Schools
- Prepare School Development Plan
- Monitor utilization of grants

SMC need to be activated and strgthening capacity building of SMC members is an essential component for effective management of school functions.SMC is the responsible body for education of all children in the geographical jurisdiction of village or ward.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Love, equality, informality, freedom, unobtrusive and tension-free evaluation of learning, recognition of individuality and individual qualities, activities that develop these qualities and abilities, application of learning theories, these are some of the facets of a Child-Friendly School. MSCERT has already created a fertile field in schools through the state -wide trainings on Child-Friendly Schools Now we are at the next step of actualizing these learning's through a results based approach to creating Child –Friendly Schools. This process can only happen through sharing of experiences and adopting and adapting best practices in our own schools. Schools can be transformed not only through a law, but by the inspired and dedicated work of teachers and school heads, supported by administrators and communities. With this belief, MPSP and UNICEF have initiated the programme,

"Let's Make Our School Child-Friendly" in the three districts of Jalna, Wardha and Yawatmal. The school head and one teacher from each of the 3300 schools in the district will participate in a two-day workshop conducted by Resource Persons trained at the state level. These RPs are themselves practicing teachers with a passion for doing something different. The workshop will involve discussions and sharing on ideas that go beyond the merely physical, into the realm of creating a more child-friendly atmosphere in the school, in classroom processes and in teacher-child interactions. Kendra Pramuksh too will be given an orientation towards this concept, to enable them to support schools in this endeavor. Teleconferencing, group SMS and other technology tools will also be used to keep in touch and solve problems that may come

up.This will help the child-friendly schools movement to gain and maintain momentum. We stared orientation of SMCs with the support of State Government Institutions and UNICEF, Mumbai. We involve SMC members in the development of Child Friendly Schools. We identified thirteen educational issues including contextual issues such as child marriage, corporal punishment, child trafficking, failure in examinations, aims of education, child friendly schools, etc. We are in process of developing script touched on the issue by highlighting the issue through its consequences, its salient factors, good practices related to addressing the issue and possible action to eradicate the issue and promote child friendly schools in every village. We also developed series of posters, films, charts and other material such as notebooks, book marks, stickers, dockets, etc. to enable more and more people think about children and their education as desired under the RTE Act. We also involved civil society organizations working in different parts of the state and convergence with various department of Education and form a state RTE steering committee for awareness amongst stakeholders, Community and members of School Management Committee. The key intention of all these activities is to prepare teachers and SMC members in every school for RTE compliance of their school. We expect every school to move towards the indicators which recognize the school as RTE compliant. For the teachers and students to claim 'My School is RTE Compliant!' Based on DISE data for the year 2012 status of RTE compliant with respect to infrastructure parameters mentioned in schedule of RTE is as mentioned in below table. Data reflected in the table is only for Zilla Parishad Schools. This is Government of Maharashtra data analyzed by UNICEF.
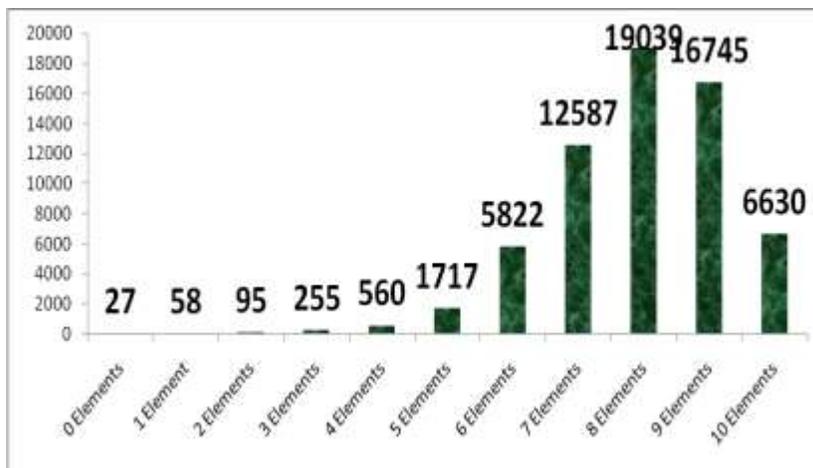
6,630 schools (10.5%) comply all norms for building   under RTE. 55,001 (86.6%) schools have 7 or more than 7 infrastructure facilities available in the schools, while 2,712 (4.3%) schools have less than 5 infrastructure facility.

This data leads towards the status of schools having basic facilities which are mandatory as per RTE. Infrastructure facilities environment of school promote to increase retention of children in the schools, hence child friendly school environment is required for completion of elementary education in a joyful manner as prescribed in the section of RTE.

Child-Friendly Schools: The RTE Perspective

The simple definition of a child -friendly school is one that children want to come to and wants to learn in. The RTE Act gives us a more detailed and multi-faceted perspective on this concept. In fact one could say that the RTE Act aims to create child -friendly schools. Sections of the Act 3,16,17,29 and 30 are especially relevant here. In brief these clauses state that:

1. The state must provide free elementary education up to the age of 14 in a nearby school to all children including children with special needs.

2. Admissions should take place without interviews, donations or any Selection process.

3. Children who have never attended school or have dropped out must be admitted to age-appropriate classes and provided special training to help them to catch up with other children in the class.

4. A child cannot be detained in any class up to Class 8, and cannot be asked to leave the school.

5. Children cannot be subject to corporal punishment or mental harassment. Discipline must be applied in a positive manner.

6. Children's mental and physical abilities must be given maximum scope for development.

7. Learning must be facilitated through exploration and activities in a Child-friendly manner.

8. Learning should be free of worry, fear, stress, and should allow free expression.

9. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation of all children must take place in a stress-free manner.

When we discuss the action plan for making our schools more child friendly, these principles must be kept in mind at all times. You will see that the focus is not on physical facilities alone, but on processes and relationships in the learning environment.

Child Friendly Action Plan

We defined each indicator in a specific and measurable manner with focus on the following indicators.

A. This happens regularly in my school in a satisfactory manner

B. This happens in my school, but it needs some strengthening

C. I would like to initiate this activity in my school

D. I may want to take up this activity later, but not right now

NA .This is not applicable in my school

Area one is related with RTE provisions. Rights of children, entitlements, no discrimination practices etc. be monitored and complied by School and teachers.

Area 1: RTE	A	B	C	D	NA
No discrimination for admission and participation in school processes (Caste, Class, Gender, Disability, Religion, Language,					
Transfer certificate and birth certificate not compulsory for admission to school					
Age appropriate admission given					

Delivering special training to all children admitted					
All children entitled to free education till completion of elementary education even after fourteen years					
No physical punishment or mental harassment					
Timely disbursement of entitlements at school level: free text books, work books, uniform transportation, library, sports equipment, mid day meal					
Provisions for CWSN utilized (Therapy, availability of resource teacher, aids and appliances supplied where necessary, Home based care for multiple disabilities and severe disability)					
Completion certificate issued to all children completing elementary education (even after fourteen years)					
Cumulative Pupil Record maintained					
Agenda and minutes of monthly SMC meeting recorded					
Area 2: School Environment	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**NA**
Display of commitment to development of Child Friendly School in a visible location					
Greenery in school (trees/ potted plants as space available)					
Playground /or space for playing available and in use					

Cleanly maintained campus, common areas					
Dustbin in each class and used by students and teachers					
Toilets kept clean with water and soap for hand washing					
Mirror and comb available					
First Aid Kit with medicines within expiry period for common illnesses available					
Sport Kit used at least once a week					
Mid-day Meals served on time					
Code of conduct for students developed in consultation with students					
Code of conduct for teachers developed in consultation with SMCs					
School display board regularly updated with relevant information (Funds available, SMC meeting decisions, enrollment, etc.)					

Area two is about school environment. This is expected from School and community to avail this facility and SMC should monitor the functionality and its maintenance.

Area3: Learning Environment	A	B	C	D	NA
Bulletin board regularly updated with informative/ interesting matter (important dates, student birthdays, joke)					
Assembly activities with opportunities for all children to lead					

Area 2: School Environment	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**NA**
Some design ideas for using school building as learning aid such as: -Height measuring scale painted on classroom wall, meter scale painted on bench, -Hopscotch court /snake and ladder board etc painted in veranda					
Clock, posters/ charts or any other educational displays at the eye level of children					
Use of a variety of seating arrangement as per requirement of the activity (groups, etc.)					
TLM / SLM accessible to children and in use (e.g. reading cards, charts, reading books, globe, Maths and English kit, etc.)					
Area3: Learning Environment	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**NA**
Establishment and/or activation of learning corners, exploratory corner					
Easy and regular access to library books					
Active child cabinet or Meena- Raju Manch					
Board/ Space for free expression by children					
Feedback box for students suggestion, problems, on working					

of school, teaching					
Functional computers and timetable of use					

Schools have been provided with ample of Educational Material including Teaching Learning Equipments from State Government, Local Authority, Schools themselves have procured local material, Teachers are preparing lot of Teaching Learning Material. All this material is available with schools and children. Area four facilitates teachers to use Educational Material for Effective Teaching Learning Process.

Area4: Child Friendly classroom processes	A	B	C	D	NA
Respecting the mother tongue of students, and accepting its use in school at the primary level					
Area4: Child Friendly classroom processes	A	B	C	D	NA
Using the first name of children to address students in the class					
Daily lesson plan with child-centered activities					
Encouraging students to work in mixed groups					
Encouraging children to ask questions and share opinions					
Asking open ended questions to children					
Encouraging and displaying students' free expression in written/artistic form.					
Promoting self study habits through open book exercises, studying using LEP activity cards, supervised study etc					
Encouraging and positive remarks to be recorded for every					

child in CCE					

This section tries to bring some of the principles of the 'constructivist approach' into the classroom in a simple and easy way, making your daily classroom process more child -friendly and therefore more effective.

This above mentioned tool has four sections:

1. RTE compliance issues

2. School environment

3. Learning environment

4. Classroom processes

In each area, there are suggestions for activities that you can initiate, as well as scope to add your own ideas. You can study this list, and analyze where your school currently stands against all these parameters. You can grade your own school as mentioned in category A, B, C, D, and NA

Progress report card of student maintained by teacher is as shown below: It motivates students and parents.
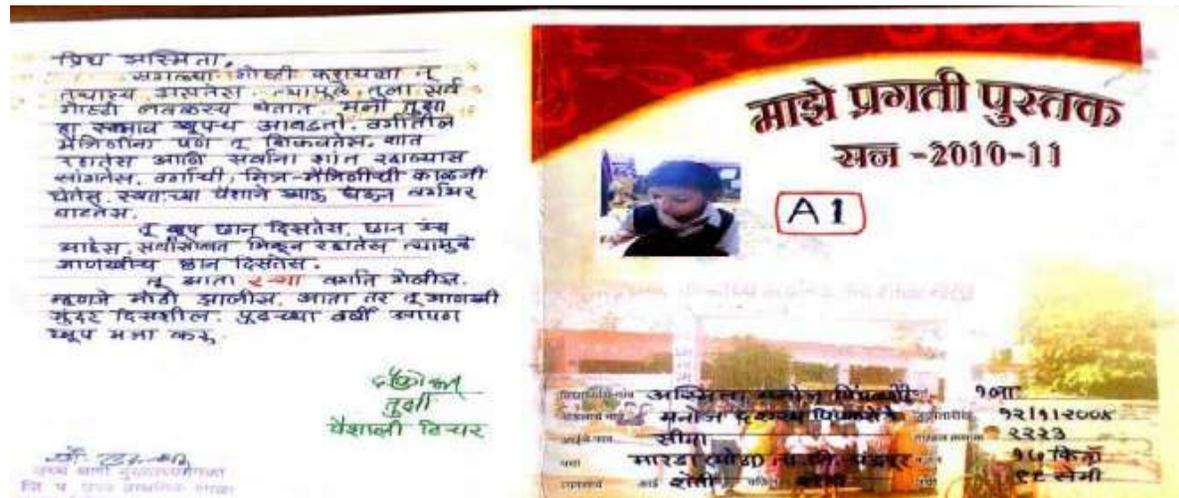
3. CONCLUSION

Design of Child Friendly Programme and feed received from Teachers and Field officers from piloting are positive and indications are confident that transformation in the school environment will take place at a rapid place, with the growth of a relationship of love and trust between teachers and children. Government of Maharashtra has accepted this programme and adopted these tools and incorporated in their regular programme guidelines to implement this programme across the state in all Government Schools.

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