

Abstract

This research attempts to critically examine and analyze the administrative framework and process of implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE) in Gujarat. The main objectives of this study include the following.

1. The conceptual and historical evolution of India's Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act 2009).
2. The theoretical framework of the RTE Act 2009 in the context of the A-4 model.
3. The administrative framework for implementing the RTE Act 2009 in Gujarat in the context of good governance.
4. The process of RTE Act implementation in Gujarat in the context of a participatory framework and analyze the role of various actors in the administrative framework.
5. The impact of the RTE Act on the enrollment and dropout rates in Gujarat.

In consonance with the objectives mentioned above, this thesis attempts to answer the following key research questions.

1. How has RTE conceptually evolved nationally and globally?
2. What are the objectives and key provisions of the RTE Act in India?
3. What is the administrative framework for implementing the RTE Act in Gujarat?
4. To what extent and in what ways does the administrative framework for implementing the RTE Act in Gujarat conform to the prevalent criteria of good governance and effective policy implementation?
5. How participatory is the overall implementation process of the RTE Act in Gujarat?
6. How has RTE Act affected the enrolment rate, retention rate and dropout rate in the state in aggregate terms as well as concerning community, gender and sub-regional variables?

The thesis contains seven chapters, each addressing specific research questions and exploring different aspects of the study. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the research, providing details on the research objectives, key research questions, research design and

significance of the study. While explaining the significance of the study, it argues that though education is a fundamental right under Article 21-A of the Indian constitution, enacting legislation alone does not guarantee the success of achieving the objectives of free and compulsory education. Proper implementation of policies in alignment with their original intent is crucial for its success.

Several studies in India have demonstrated that welfare rights embedded in statutes and constitutions lack implementation, monitoring, and enforcement systems. Therefore, many government policies in the past have failed to achieve their goals due to a lack of proper implementation machinery. Hence, it is imperative to study the policy implementation process, which is an intricate process involving multiple actors and stakeholders.

This research concentrates on the implementation of the RTE Act in Gujarat, which despite its high economic growth and industrial development, needs to catch up in human development indicators, particularly education. In this light, the present study is crucial since it examines gaps in the policy process of implementing the RTE Act, documents good practices and success stories, and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the administrative framework in Gujarat.

The first chapter further outlines the research design adopted by the researcher, discusses limitations, and provides the scheme of chapterization.

The second chapter of the thesis delves into the research topic by examining various aspects through a comprehensive review of scholarly sources such as books, journal articles, reports, and empirical studies. The literature review focuses on the right to education and its historical and conceptual evolution. The chapter also discusses compulsory education policies, the Rights-Based Approach to Education, and diverse approaches to education in a multi-disciplinary context. It further explores the significance of the right to education by citing literature that highlights its impact on variables such as health, crime rate, and fertility. Additionally, it examines literature that discusses the absence of compulsory education policies in India, major education policy initiatives in India before RTE, the normative analysis of the RTE Act, and empirical studies focusing on implementing the Act in India and Gujarat. Lastly, the chapter identifies gaps in the literature that provide a rationale for the present study and draws the theoretical dimensions that contribute to the present study.

The third chapter, at the outset, includes detailed discussions on the normative dimensions related to the concept of rights, education and the right to education. It is carried out with

recognition of the fact that the concept of the right to education is an amalgamation of two separate concepts- right and education. Thus, the discussion on rights and education is imperative for the conceptual analysis and for providing a theoretical framework for the right to education. In this light, the chapter discusses the different interpretations and significance of rights and education. In addition, it examines the perspectives on education in Indian and Western traditions and highlights its political and economic dimensions.

Further, the chapter proceeds to explore the conceptual/normative dimensions of the right to education from the theoretical perspectives of natural, moral, legal, and human rights. Subsequently, the chapter explores the historical evolution of Right to Education in the Indian context. In this light, it examines India's education system and policies from Vedic times to post-independence period, till education was proclaimed a fundamental right. Moreover, the chapter proceeds to examine the conceptual dimensions of the right to education act 2009, using the normative framework by Katarina Tomasevski. The 4-As of the framework- Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability are used to examine and analyze various provisions of the RTE Act 2009. In this light, the study points out that while the Act fulfils certain criteria, it falls short on a few fronts. In addition, the chapter explores the conceptual and historical evolution of the concept of the right to education on the global level. It provides insight into the role of several international and regional declarations, treaties and conventions that have proclaimed education as a fundamental human right. In addition to this, the chapter also explores the right to education from an international perspective by providing an overview of the education system in the USA, UK, Finland, Mexico and South Africa.

The fourth chapter of the thesis primarily focuses on assessing the administrative framework in Gujarat or implementing the RTE Act. It includes discussions on various public policy models like the top-down approach, bottom-up approach, and hybrid model, which provides a theoretical backdrop to the study. Further, the chapter examines the administrative structure enacted in Gujarat to implement the RTE Act, evaluating the role and responsibilities of all the actors and agencies engaged in the process. This includes the state Department of Education, Directorate of Primary Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission office, Gujarat Council for Education and Research, State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, local authority, State Advisory Council, School Principals and teachers, School Management Committee members. Findings based on the interviews and observations highlight the nuances in the administration structure.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the concept of good governance, highlighting its evolution, meaning, parameters and significance in the policy discourse. It further contains a normative analysis of the Gujarat state model rules (2012) for implementing the RTE Act 2009 in the framework of good governance parameters like- participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, and strategic vision. While the chapter outlines the provisions of the model rules which fulfil the above-mentioned criteria of good governance, it also highlights the ones which do not. And lastly, the chapter compares the RTE model rules of states performing well on the education front, like Kerela, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, with Gujarat rules.

In chapter five of the thesis, the implementation process of the RTE Act 2009 in Gujarat is explored with a focus on participatory aspects. The chapter delves into the significance of the participatory policy framework, outlining the Act's participatory aspects and involvement of stakeholders. Specifically in Gujarat, the role of local authorities is evaluated to assess implementation's participatory dimensions. Additionally, the chapter includes an empirical analysis through surveys and personal interviews to examine the role of School Management Committee members in implementing the RTE Act in the state.

In the sixth chapter of the thesis, the impact of the RTE Act on enrollment and dropout rates in Gujarat is analyzed. The data used is from UDISE for the years 2012-13 to 2016-17, focusing on indicators such as Gross Enrollment Ratio, Net Enrollment Ratio, and total enrollment rate for Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, Other Backward Castes, and gender. The analysis is done comparatively across various districts, which have been divided into four regional zones: North, Central, South, and Saurashtra & Kutch. The study found that some districts performed better than others. Additionally, the chapter examines the dropout rate in the state after the implementation of RTE Act. It was discovered that children's dropout rates decreased, which was not solely due to the RTE Act but also because of the government's multipronged approach. The government's regular enrollment drive called 'Praveshotsav', Kanya Kelavani Rath for girls, and initiatives like School on Wheel and Vidya Lakshmi scheme contributed to achieving the dual goals of increasing enrollment and decreasing dropout rates in the state. The final chapter of the thesis provides a summary of the observations, recommendations, and suggestions for future research. This section delves into the overall implementation of Right to Education (RTE) in the state, highlighting both its strengths and weaknesses, including administrative processes. Additionally, it offers suggestions regarding the roles and functions of various offices and actors involved in the implementation of the Act. Through various data

collection methods, such as observation, interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions, the chapter offers recommendations on specific provisions of the Act to enhance its overall execution in the state. Lastly, the chapter outlines future areas of research.