

'RIGHT TO EDUCATION'- TOWARDS AN EDUCATED INDIA



THE Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 popularly known as Right to Education (RTE) Act is one of the far-reaching reforms in the landscape of education of free India. The history of this Act lies in the constitutional amendment (Article 21A) of the Indian Constitution making education a fundamental right. Though it took more than 5 years for the Act to see the light of the day since its conceptualization, commencement of the Act with effect from 1st April, 2010 is the first step in providing the children within a given age range a guaranteed opportunity to be provided with free and compulsory education. This is possibly one of the unique steps toward developing a comprehensive inclusive educational policy in India.

Some of the major provisions of the Act are as under:

1. The Act covers all children within the age range from 6 to 14 who will be entitled to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school.
2. The scope of the Act is limited to elementary education i.e. education from class-1 to class-8.
3. The Central as well as the state governments will have concurrent responsibility for providing funds necessary to meet the expenses under the Act. The government as well as the local authorities defined in the Act will also be responsible for availability of a neighboring school for admission of such children.

4. It will be mandatory for all schools to admit children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups, to the extent of 25 per cent of the strength of the class, in Class-1.

5. No admitted child can be held back in a class or expelled until completion of the elementary education. The Act specifically bans any type of capitation fees or any screening procedure for admission to a school. The Act also makes it compulsory for the parents of the children in the given age range to admit their children in the schools.

6. The Act specifies various standards & norms including infrastructure, teaching standards, students-teacher ratio, and formation of school management committee among others. It also talks about improving the quality of teachers as well as developing a national curriculum for elementary education.

7. The Act provides for monitoring the rights of the children under the Act by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights or the concerned State Commission.

8. The Act also makes it mandatory for all schools to follow the guidelines of the Act to be eligible for continuity of operation or for start of a new school.

9. Several penal provisions are also prescribed in the Act towards non-compliance.

The clauses of the Act thus have far-reaching

The 'Right to Education' Act could prove to be a landmark decision in the field of education in India

implications on the way the schools are being established and their operations run in the country, for Primary Education. While the provisions of the Act may be altruistic in their aim in creating an inclusive elementary education system, its implementability at the ground level is doubtful.

Some of the grounds on which the Act has been criticized are:

1. Education coming under Concurrent List, support of the State Government is essential to make things happen. Many state governments have already expressed their apprehension stating that they do not have the required financial resources to support the ambitious project.

2. Some of the quality norms / standards are just not practically feasible particularly in the rural areas. Some estimates forecast that to meet the prescribed 30:1 student-teacher ratio, the country needs at least half a million additional trained teachers, which is a nearly impossible target.

3. Whether the stated directive of mandatory requirement of admitting 25 per cent of children in class-1 from among the children of underprivileged / weaker section of people will ever be adhered to, is doubtful. Many private schools have raised objection to the provision and how this is going to be monitored is also a difficult proposition. Some Societies / Associations of private schools have already termed the Act as an infringement on their Constitutional Right to run private education-ventures without government interference.

4. That the children once admitted cannot be held back in class or expelled might result into unhealthy practices among children or their parents who would like to take protection under the provision.

5. One of the major issues in India is reluctance on part of the parents particularly in the rural areas to send their wards to schools because of underemployment related issues. Despite the mandatory provisions prescribed in the Act, the success thereof to large extent will depend on propensity of such parents to send their children to schools.

6. The constitution of the school management committee prescribing minimum 75 per cent from

parents / guardians has also come under criticism as this might result into undue interference in managing the schools in a professional manner.

It is too early to say about the success or failure of the Act. No doubt, India has joined the League of Nations in declaring education as a fundamental right as well as providing a legal framework for implementing the same. Much will now depend on the willingness and statesmanship of the political leaders as well as administrators to make the desired things happen without too many ripples. A noble cause should not be lost because of political interference.

The academicians and people belonging to educational fraternity have an immense role to play through:

a. Creating an awareness about the Act and its benefits as well as hurdles,

b. Helping the governments at various levels in developing curriculum as well as training teachers for primary sector,

c. Being a part of the civil society to ensure proper implementation of the Act in our respective places through mentoring / coaching various stakeholders, and finally

d. Conducting research & providing inputs to the governments / relevant authorities about effectiveness of the Act at the ground level.

Finally, how far the Act succeeds in creating an inclusive society in the long-run will be the acid test of its effective implementation.

(This article has been authored by Dr A. K. Sengupta, Director - SJES College of Management Studies, Mumbai and Convener, Higher Education Forum (HEF). He may be contacted at aksengupta51@gmail.com.)

EXPERT-SPEAK: HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM

will need a basic technique, and a basic grounding. All music assessment, regardless of the genre it exists in, assesses the same basic elements, such as tone production, fingering (through scales etc) and the ability to realise the composer's intentions through notation. This is true of Trinity classical music exams, jazz exams and the Rockschool exams. In addition, it also assesses the candidate's abilities within the genre being studied, so, for example, jazz exams assess improvisation techniques and the use of jazz scales (modes.) It may be worth noting the need to separate out "learning to play", from "learning about" - the historical growth and development of music including the Popular music culture, particularly over the last 50 years,

since recording and electronic instruments first became significant. In any school, where music is taught - even in India - there would be some study of music in this way, the way it is in the UK.

Indian musical instruments have had different traditional training forms, how do you plan to assess classical Indian music?

We will be bringing together our standardisation skills and leading talent from the Indian music fields to create the right system of assessment. In India, music teaching of an instrument begins through parental influence and tradition. This explains why at the early grades most candidates are likely to be entered through the classical route.

UPBEAT ON INDIA

Trinity College London is set to become a strong player in India in the field of testing and assessment of various skills



TRINITY College London is well-known for its expertise in the area of testing and assessment of English language, Music, Speech and Drama, Dance and Outreach. The organisation is looking at increasing their footprint in India. Vimmi Singh, the newly appointed Managing Director of Trinity College London India Private Ltd (TCLIPL) speaks to Kavari Roy about the growing commitment of Trinity in India, amongst other things. Excerpts:

How old is the 'Trinity' brand in India and what are the areas that it is actively present in?

Trinity College London has been offering graded examinations for Music in India since the 1880's. Over the last decade or so, we have also been conducting English language assessments, which is an area that is rapidly growing.

How do you perceive India as a market for Trinity's growth?

Trinity College is deeply committed to growing its footprint in India. We are already a leader in the testing of music in India and we see a vast potential to grow here.

What kind of prospects do you find for language proficiency assessments in India?

Sustained economic growth in India requires more English speakers. This is another key area where Trinity can play an important role. Over the past 10 years it's been fascinating watching the English language examinations community

strive to include efficient oral testing as a new part of their tests-as we have been doing exactly that all along, since 1938.

Now, more than ever, employers are realising the need for ways to ensure that the prospective staff can actually perform the tasks asked of them. We are at the forefront of offering exactly that worldwide. The strength of our Speaking and Listening exams has encouraged our users worldwide to request a 4-skills examination from Trinity (Integrated Skills in English (ISE)) which was launched some 6 years ago. Whereas most examinations from other Boards can conceal weaknesses in one or more skills by taking an aggregate score, Trinity ensures that all skills - Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking are given equal weightage to encourage a balanced acquisition of language. A large part of our international reputation is based on the fact that we are the only international examining body offering an unscripted oral part of our exams. This means that employers, universities, and immigration authorities have a concrete proof of what successful candidates can actually do.

In the Indian context, our English assessments fit in very well. India's development requires that more people move into jobs in the organised sector, most of which requires

good spoken English.

How does Trinity plan to create a need for formal training in western musical instruments in India?

The need for formal training already exists to a large extent. We would like to bring more music making opportunities to students and teachers and enhance the joy in learning and

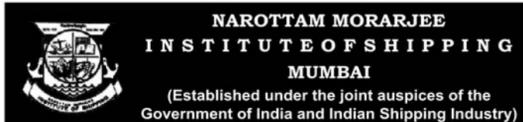
IN CONVERSATION

playing music. We find that many of the music students taking our exams drop out at grade 4 or 5, often either because not enough teachers are available to take them through higher grades or because school curriculum begin to take priority. Creating a pull effect, where the benefits of learning music are well understood would greatly help in retaining the talent to go further.

India has followed the Western way of approaching music through the Classical route. Classical in the sense that in any circumstances a student

FACT-FILE

Trinity College London, the international examinations board incorporating Trinity Guildhall, offers accredited qualifications in English language and the performing and creative arts. They conduct 500,000 assessments each year worldwide, from graded examinations and certificates to diplomas and higher-level vocational qualifications. Trinity began offering examinations in music to external students in 1877, and later expanded its provision to offer examinations in other areas of the performing arts. In 2004, Trinity College London's performing arts examinations division merged with the external examinations department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to form Trinity Guildhall. Assessments in English language learning and teaching were first offered by Trinity College London in 1938. Today, Trinity College London ESOL offers certificates in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for non-native speakers of English, and in Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) for teachers of non-native speakers of English.



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MUMBAI UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI MAHARASHTRA

Search Committee invites applications for the post of Vice Chancellor

Mumbai University is an innovative institution offering technical, vocational, Professional & Liberal education programmes at diploma, degree and post-graduate level, using the modern communication technologies under an open system of Higher Education. University offers over 250 programmes through 672 affiliated colleges catering to over 6.5 lakh students every year. This University established in 1857 is one of the oldest in the country and famous all over the world.

Government of Maharashtra has recently amended the Maharashtra Universities Act, 1994 vide Maharashtra Act No. XIV of 2009 dated 25th June, 2009, which provides for a transparent and an objective process for selection of Vice Chancellor with an idea to select a scholar of eminence with leadership qualities and administrative abilities, who would be able to transform the University into a Centre for Academic & Professional Excellence.

Chancellor and Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra has formed a three member Search Committee (consisting of Dr. Ashok Kolaskar, Vice Chancellor, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Bhubaneswar; Dr. Padnabhan Balram, Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and J. S. Saharia, Principal Secretary, Department of Higher & Technical Education, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai) for recommending names for the post of VC.

The above Search Committee now invites applications/nominations from eminent academicians who fulfill the qualifications and experience prescribed for the post of Vice Chancellor by Maharashtra Act No. XIV of 2009 dated 25th June 2009 and are willing to take this challenging assignment. All the necessary details regarding essential qualifications and experience, desirable experience and expected skills and competencies etc. are given at University Website www.mu.ac.in

Interested individuals may apply giving detailed resume, along with two-page justification for his/her candidature, two-page vision statement for the University and names of three distinguished individuals well acquainted with his/her work.

Institutions may also nominate suitable candidates.

The Search Committee has appointed Mr. L. C. Amarnathan, Registrar, KIIT University at post KIIT, Bhubaneswar - 751 024, as the Nodal Officer. (E-mail: lcarnathan@hotmail.com) Ph. No. 09937220211/ 0674-2725481

Applications/nominations may be sent to the Nodal Officer within one month of the publication of this advertisement.

If needed, short-listed candidates may be invited for personal interaction with the Search Committee.

This is an excellent opportunity for educational administrators to implement innovations in higher education and take forward this prestigious centre of higher learning.

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