10 Years of RTE 12(1)(c) in Chhattisgarh

December 2021

Foreword

Under the Right to Education Act Section 12(1)(c), 25% of seats in the elementary classes of all private schools in Chhattisgarh have been reserved for the children from economically weaker and socially disadvantaged sections. Through the Act, children from different sections of society study and interact with each other from an early age, thereby moving towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Under this provision, more than 3 lakh children have been admitted to the 6500+ private schools in Chhattisgarh. The School Education Department, Chhattisgarh and Indus Action is publishing a report to analyse the impact of RTE 12(1)(c) over the last decade. The measures taken by the state to create awareness, promote admissions, and ensure transparent online reimbursement are very commendable. This Act is necessary in enabling access to education for children from vulnerable sections. In view of this, RTE was launched by the Government of Chhattisgarh and seats were extended up to Class XII so that children could complete their secondary education without any hindrance.

My gratitude to all the private schools of Chhattisgarh for successfully implementing Section 12(1)(c). Congratulations to Indus Action for working closely with the School Education Department, Chhattisgarh and contributing to making the process online, accountable, and transparent.

Dr. Premsai Singh Tekam
Hon. Minister of School Education
Govt. of Chhattisgarh

Foreword

Under the Right to Education Section 12(1)(c), around 3 lakh children have been admitted to the 6500+ private schools of Chhattisgarh in the last 10 years. This scheme enables children from economically weaker and socially disadvantaged sections of society to access education. It gives children from these families the opportunity to study in a school of their choice. The objective of the Right to Education is to promote an inclusive environment in the society.

The report depicts the 10-year journey of Right to Education Section 12(1)(c) in the state. To make the implementation more transparent and efficient, the entire process was made online through an MIS portal. Admissions are now done through an online centralised lottery, and the attendance and performance of admitted students are also tracked on the portal. The portal ensures timely redressal of grievances and transparency in the reimbursement process.

My gratitude to Indus Action for their full cooperation with the School Education Department, Chhattisgarh in order to make the whole process transparent and build the capacity of various stakeholders.

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Acknowledgement

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Summary

The opportunity to attain quality education plays a major role in ensuring the bricks and mortar with which a society is built on is intact. To this end, the Constitution mandates free and compulsory education for children from economically weaker and socially disadvantaged sections of the society in unaided private schools through Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act. Ten years since the provision was made, this report evaluates its performance in one of the country's best performing states – Chhattisgarh.

Chhattisgarh, a young state, has been a pioneer in implementing the Act since its inception. This report aims to uncover the 10-year journey of the RTE 12(1)(c) in the state with the data available from the RTE portal established in the state. It assesses the success of the provision in increasing inclusion and also improving learning levels across categories of children. Lastly, based on our analysis, we suggest recommendations on how to improve current processes and create other systems through which the objective of inclusion can be achieved.

In the 10 years since the Act's inception, the following developments have been observed:

- 60% of students enrolled under the Act are from economically weaker sections and 40% from socially disadvantaged groups in the state.
- An online MIS portal was established in 2017 for streamlining the admission process, initiating an online lottery system and addressing grievances from various stakeholders on time.
- Student enrollment has shown a growth over the years, with the seat fill rate climbing by 14.5% in three academic sessions since the inception of the portal. In 2019–20, the highest number of RTE seats were registered in Bilaspur and lowest in Narayanpur. The seat fill rate has been topped by Mahasamund with 85% and ironically, Bilaspur is at the bottom of the list with 35% of seats filled in the same session.
- Students in elementary classes in RTE seats score better grades in the academic assessments in comparison with those in higher classes as per the data entered on the portal by the school authorities.
- The dropout rate of students from the RTE seats over 10 academic sessions is 21.45%.
- The medium of instruction is a prominent factor in the academic performance of students in private schools. With 54% of students learning their curriculum in Hindi, 44% in English, and 2% bilingually across the state, students in Hindi-medium schools score better ranks than the others on average.
- A greater number of boys have been admitted under the provision as compared to girls in all the academic years. However, the gender gap to total students ratio has reduced from 10% in 2010–11 to 3% in 2019–20.
- The grievance redressal mechanism has been made more effective through three modes in the portal. Complaints are registered through the helpline number, emails, and directly on the portal that is consistently followed up and resolved each year since 2018–19.

The amount incurred for each 12(1)(c) seat is reimbursed by the state to the schools. The process has undergone interventions, especially since the last three years, to improve the delays and reduce the time lapsed in the transfer of the amount to the beneficiary. The approval rate by the Project Approval Board (PAB) was less than 30% for academic year 2019-20 and current. At present, in the session 2020-21, a total amount of Rs.161.5 crores has been paid directly from the state level to the accounts of the schools, that was the pending amount from the year 2014-15 to 2019-20.

Currently, 3,01,317 students continue to study under RTE 12 (1)(c) across Chhattisgarh. As per the state RTE portal, there are 6511 private schools registered under the Act with 83,006 seats for the academic year 2021-22. With the completion of the second and the final round of the lottery for AY 2021-22 in October 2021, 47,382 admissions have been processed recording a fill rate of 53.6%.

Through this report, we try to understand the impact of the provision over the years and analyze how deep the roots of Section 12(1)(c) of Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act run in the state of Chhattisgarh. Although there has been progress in terms of the number of children studying under RTE 12(1)(c) and the number of private schools registered, support for children to cope in the schools in age-appropriate classes, capacity building of teachers, promoting seats for Children with Special Needs and non-binary communities, active involvement of state authorized body in grievance redressal, optimized data collection and infrastructural development of schools to ensure the quality as promised in the act would be the required next steps to move the state in the right direction. This would help in understanding how to strengthen the status of the state in terms of ensuring social inclusion and plan for the next decade with quality interventions.

Introduction

Ensuring equitable access to quality education to students is an opportunity and challenge for any developing state and country. An opportunity because the demographic dividends a country/state reaps from an educated young population is tremendous. A challenge because of issues with state capacity, political will, policies and societal inequalities.

Chhattisgarh, a state with over 1 crore children in the school/college–going population, is in a similar situation. With enrolment and learning levels below the national average, particularly among vulnerable categories (SC/ST/EWS), focus on inclusive access and quality of education is an urgent need. Acting on this, Chhattisgarh began implementing an affirmative action provision – the Right to Education, Section RTE 12(1)(c) in 2010.

The Right to Education's Section RTE 12(1)(c) is a provision that reserves 25% of the seats in private schools for children belonging to socially discriminated categories as well as economically weaker sections. This provision was meant to increase inclusion of disadvantaged groups by giving them the opportunity to study free–of–cost in schools they could not otherwise afford, with the Government taking ownership of the cost incurred for each student. To make sure that private schools do not lose out on student fees, the government reimburses a fixed cost of tuition, uniforms and books to them.

Chhattisgarh has been implementing the provision since its inception in 2010, and has now become one of the best–implementing states in the country. This report aims to uncover the 10 year journey of the RTE 12(1)(c) in Chhattisgarh. It assesses whether the provision has been successful in increasing inclusion and also improving learning levels across categories of children. RTE 12(1)(c) started as an offline process in 2010 and, in the last 3.5 years, has moved to an online process. This report, therefore, also looks at how this major change, as well as other iterations to the online admissions process, has impacted the uptake of this provision. Lastly, based on our analysis, we suggest recommendations on how to improve current processes and create other systems through which the objective of inclusion can be achieved.

State Demographics

Chhattisgarh is one of the most recent states carved out in India and yet, has already been lauded for its efficient bureaucracy, fast-growing economy, and urban planning. Split into 28 districts which are clubbed into 5 *sambhags*, and bordering 7 states, Chhattisgarh is one of the most diverse states – geographically, linguistically, and culturally. Its population of about 3 crores majorly belongs to ST (31%), OBCs (46%), and SCs (14%), and its people speak 7 regional languages.

It is also a demographically young state with close to a third of its population in the school- and college-going age bracket. If the state can ensure quality access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and livelihoods, Chhattisgarh has immense possibilities of reaping a large demographic dividend.

However, Chhattisgarh's education indicators show that the state has a long way to go in this sector. 70.3% of the population is literate, as per the 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 80.3% while female literacy is at 59.6%. 70% of children attend government schools, while 30% attend private schools and the latter figure has been rising. Average enrolment across private and public schools stands at 95.5%. If we were to zoom in on the 15–16 age bracket, this figure drops to 89%. A key factor to note is that enrolment in the 6–10 age group has dropped in the last 2 years, from 98.5% to 96.9%. Chhattisgarh ranks below the national average in arithmetic and reading levels, as of 2018.

There are also caste-wise differences in enrolment ratio, according to a 2018 MHRD report. Children from SCs and STs having a lower enrolment ratio at the primary school level as compared to the national average. The ratio is better at the upper-middle and higher schools levels.

RTE 12(1)(c)

The Act, in its essence, translates into social inclusion and provision of equal opportunity to all underprivileged and underserved children. Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 mandates 25% reservation of seats in entry-level classes in private schools for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Disadvantaged Groups (DG) of society. The criteria for EWS and DG are defined as per state norms. Students whose families fall BPL (below poverty line) or whose parents are not alive are considered as EWS. SC, ST, children with 40% disability, parents with certificate of forest rights or belonging to tribal groups are considered to belong to DGs.

Chhattisgarh has adopted RTE Section 12(1)(c) in 2010 with the benefits extending for students till Grade 8. The state has amended the reach of the Act to all students till Grade 12 in 2019. Entry-level classes are defined to be nursery, kindergarten, and Grade 1. Children of age 3 to 6 ½ years are eligible for admission. As per the RTE portal, there are 6511 unaided private schools registered on the portal with 83006 seats in the academic year 2021–22.

Since 2017, the state has been using an online portal to make the lottery system more transparent and the admission process more efficient. The portal works through its computer-based Management Information System (MIS). The modules of MIS are school registration, student registration, lottery, document verification, student tracking and reimbursement. A helpline is provided on the portal to assist the applicants and resolve grievances.

Data Analysis

Data available from government websites and various reports can be used to analyze the impact of RTE 12 (1)(c) in Chhattisgarh since 2010. The data over the years show a growth in the number of students admitted to the RTE seats, except for a dip in 2015. Among the 10 academic sessions, the highest number of student admission is recorded in 2019-20 and the least in 2010-11.

There has been considerable growth in the Section 12 (1) (c) admissions after the online MIS portal was set up (Graph 1). Campaigns through various partner organizations on the ground escalated the awareness of the Act among parents and communities. Student enrollment has shown a growth over the years, with the seat fill rate climbing by 14.5% in three academic sessions since the inception of the portal.

Of 28 districts in the state, in 2019-20, the highest number of RTE seats were registered in Bilaspur and lowest in Narayanpur, which is a factor of the number of private schools in the districts. The seat fill rate has been topped by Mahasamund with 85% and ironically, Bilaspur is at the bottom of the list with 35% of seats filled in the same session.
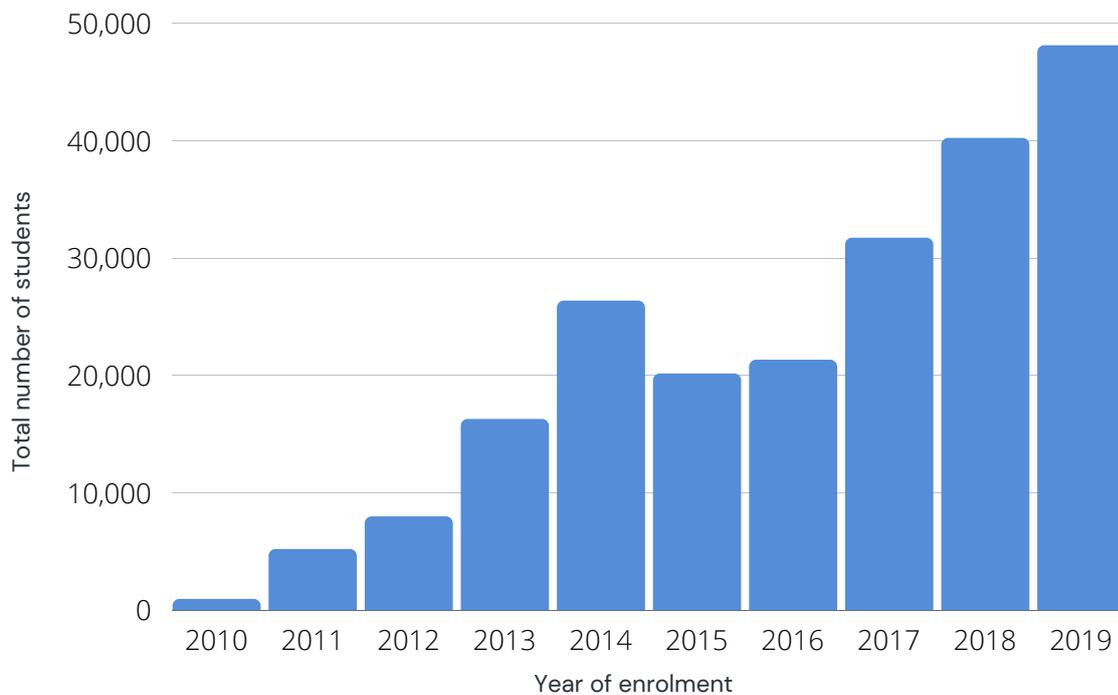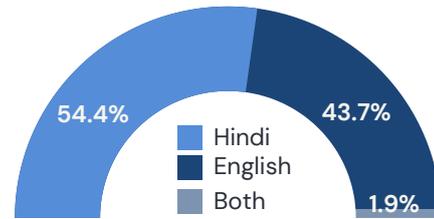

**Graph 1: Year wise total number of students enrolled in the state since 2010**
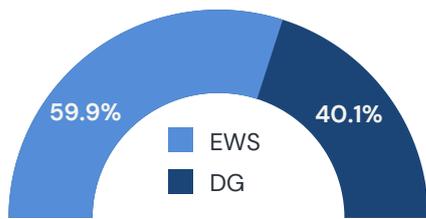
Graph 2: Percentage of students according to admission category

Graph 3: Percentage of students according to the medium of instruction of the school

59.9% of the students admitted are from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and the remaining 40.1% are from Disadvantaged groups (DG) (Graph 2).

54.4% of students learn the curriculum in Hindi and 43.7% in English whereas 1.9% of the students learn bilingually (Graph 3).
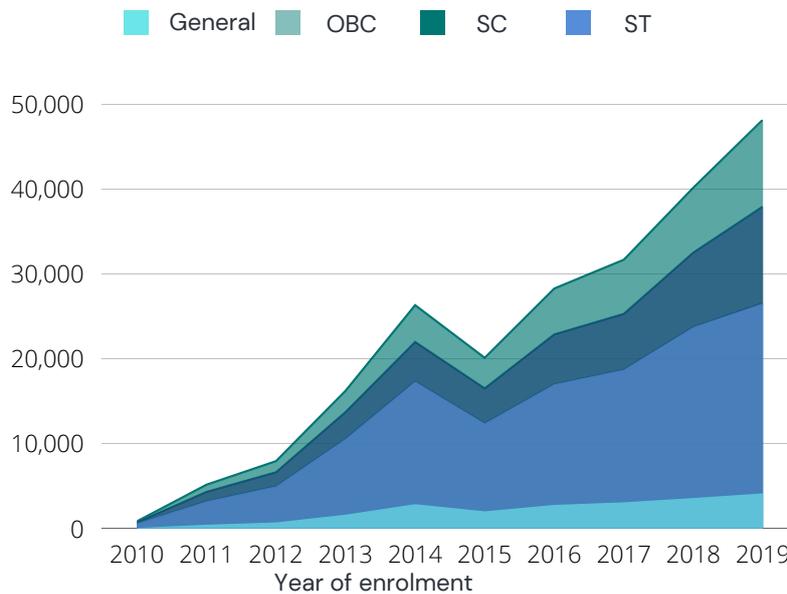
Graph 4: Year wise distribution of students based on their caste

Among all the students enrolled in the RTE seats, the highest number is noted from the OBC community, followed by SC, ST respectively. Students falling under General category have recorded the least enrolment in the last 10 years (Graph 4).

There has been a hike in the number of RTE seats filled over the years. Fill rate is the ratio of seats filled by students to the total seats available in the 25% margin. The fill rate has risen from about 50% to 65% in the last three years(Graph 5). Out of all districts, 27 reached maturing stage, that is, having a fill rate greater than 50%, with only Bilaspur falling in the maturing category with a 46.32% fill rate in 2020-21 (Table 2).
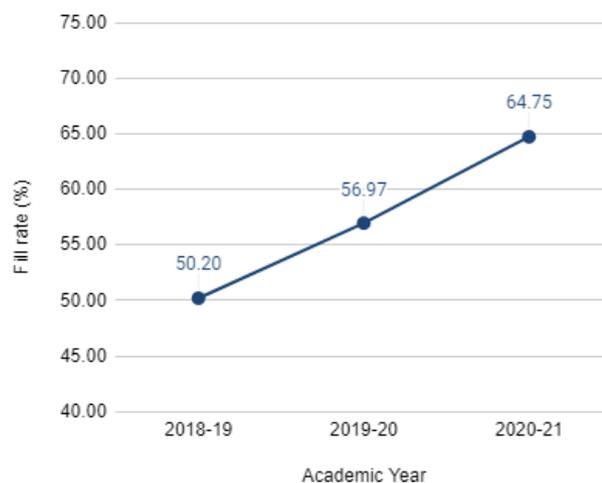
Graph 5: The rate of RTE seats filled in the last three academic years

| Academic Year	RTE seats	Seats filled	Seat Fill Rate (%)
2018–19	80109	40216	50.20
2019–20	84468	48119	56.97
2020–21	81356	52676	64.75

Table 1: Number of RTE seats filled out of the total availability and seat fill rate in the last three academic years

Name of District	Seat Fill Rate 2019–20	2020–21	Name of District	Seat Fill Rate 2019–20	2020–21
Raipur	0.42	0.57	Sakti	0.62	0.73
Bilaspur	0.35	0.46	Surajpur	0.75	0.55
Durg	0.46	0.64	Sarguja	0.78	0.71
Janjgeet Champa	0.72	0.63	Balrampur	0.72	0.73
Korba	0.49	0.76	Jashpur	0.54	0.61
Rajnandgaon	0.54	0.61	Bemetara	0.71	0.79
Baloda Bazar	0.68	0.77	Gariaband	0.44	0.71
Raigarh	0.79	0.73	Kanker	0.55	0.58
Mungeli	0.65	0.87	Balod	0.78	0.57
Mahasamund	0.71	0.87	Kondagaon	0.70	0.68
Koriya	0.52	0.84	Bijapur	0.66	0.52
Dhamtari	0.78	0.83	Dantewada	0.71	0.62
Kawardha	0.85	0.78	Sukma	0.63	0.72
Bastar	0.82	0.52	Narayanpur	0.77	0.70

Table 2: District-wise fill rate of RTE seats in 2019–20 and 2020–21

There has been a growth in the number of admissions of boys and girls since 2010 (Graph 6). Data shows a greater number of boys getting admitted compared to girls. 14 students have been admitted who identify themselves as non-binary since the advent of online portal. The addition of 'Others' as a gender category in the application process is a step towards social inclusion.

According to the 2011 census, Chhattisgarh records a 20.1% gender gap in literacy rate higher than the country's average of 16.3%. The gap in enrollment could be a contributing factor to this.
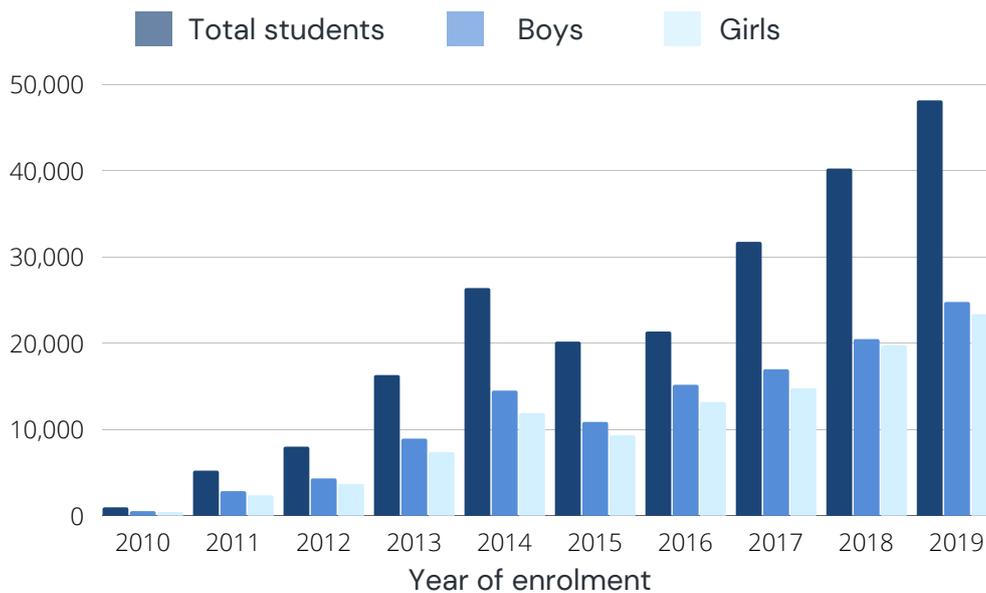
Graph 6: Gender-wise distribution of students as per their year of admission

The ratio of gender gap in enrolment to total enrolment has reduced in the last 2 academic years compared to the initial years of RTE admissions. In the first batch of 2010-11, the difference was noted to be 9.71%. In the batch of 2019-20, the difference has fallen to less than 3%. The difference is evident in the attendance record of the students. Boys attend school more consistently than girls in all the districts.
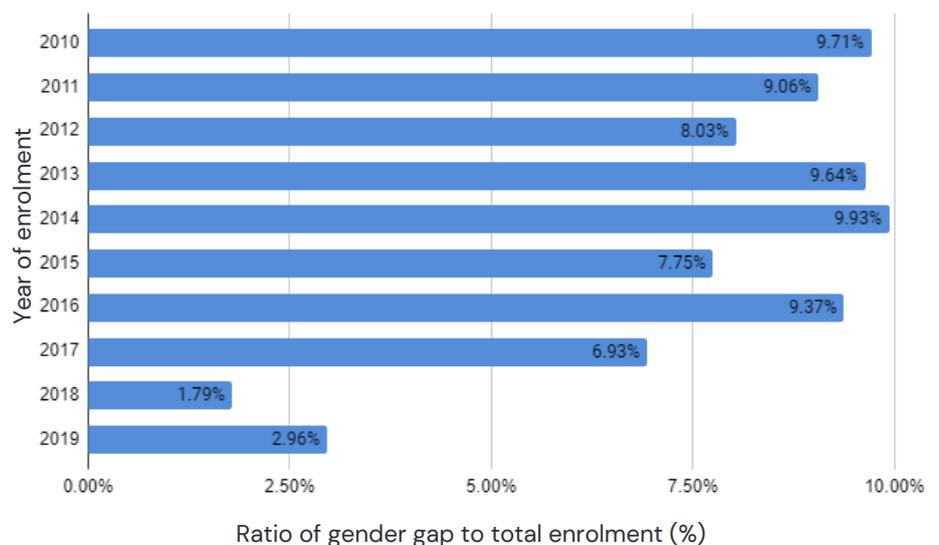

Graph 7: Year wise difference in number of boys and girls in enrollment

The dropout rate of students from the RTE seats in the state over 10 academic sessions is 21.45%. The highest drop outs are in Narayanpur, Sukma, Dantewada and Sakti. These are also the districts with the lower student enrolment with majority of students belonging to disadvantaged groups.

There are an alarming 9688 students who did not join the school even after getting admission in the last three academic years. 19 districts have shown an increase in the number of students who did not join schools after securing RTE seats in 2020-21 compared to the previous academic year. Among the 19 districts, the majority of students who did not join are from the OBC community. Exceptions are Balrampur, Kondagaon and Sarguja where the increase occurred from ST and Mungeli, from SC.
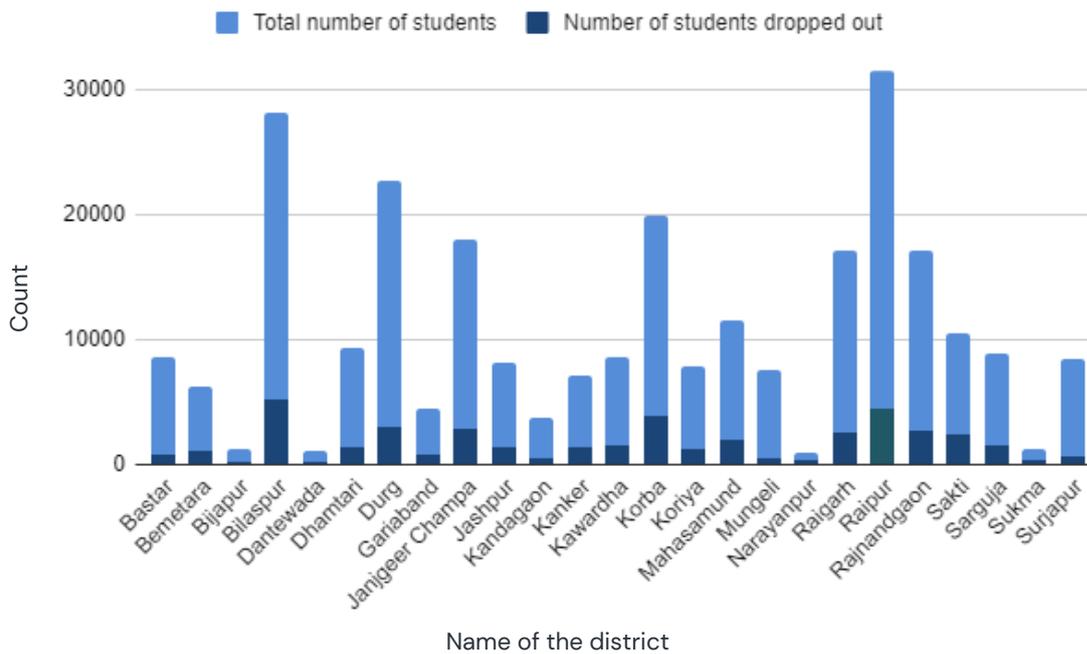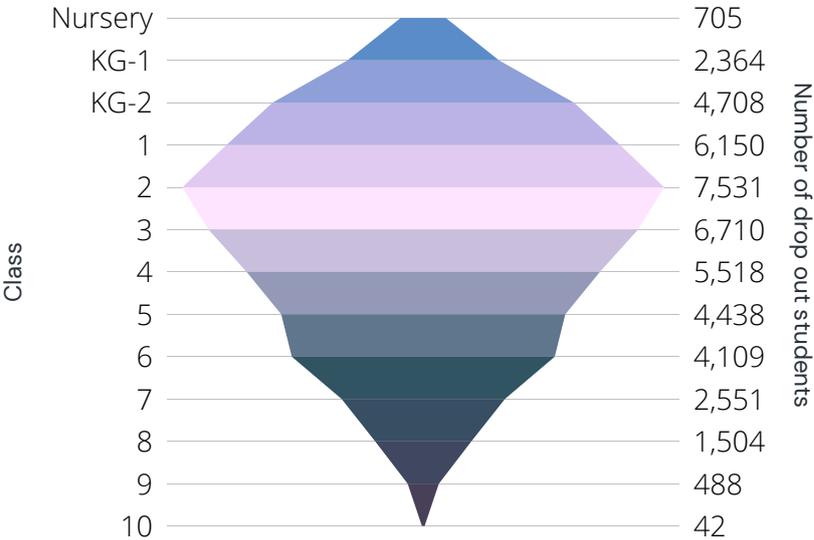

Graph 8: The number of students admitted and dropped out in each districts of Chhattisgarh in 10 years
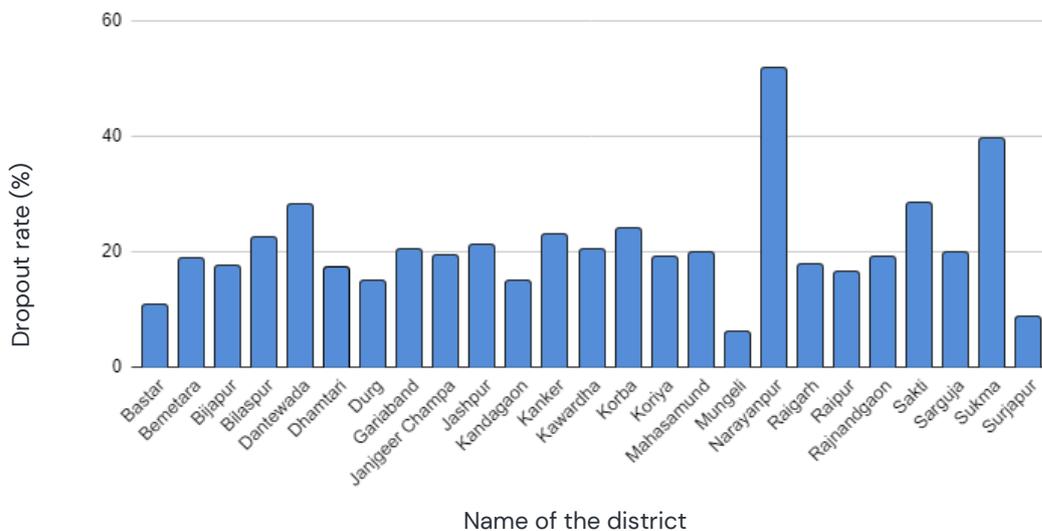
Graph 9: Percentage of students dropped out in each districts of Chhattisgarh in 10 years

As the data suggests, probability of attrition diminishes as the student reaches the higher grades (Graph 10). The highest number of dropouts occur in Class 2, a year after entry into the school. This is suggestive of the conducive environment necessary in the initial years of admission of a child. Dropout rate is the least in Class 10. Only 42 students reaching Class 10 dropped out during the academic year as compared to 7531 in Class 2.

Class	Number of drop out students
Nursery	705
KG-1	2,364
KG-2	4,708
1	6,150
2	7,531
3	6,710
4	5,518
5	4,438
6	4,109
7	2,551
8	1,504
9	488
10	42

Graph 10: The number of students dropped out in each class in the state

Student performance can be analysed from the ranks scored by students in Raipur and Bilaspur, two districts with the maximum number of student enrollment. In general, students whose learning medium is Hindi outperform those who are taught in English. Students score better ranks in the elementary classes compared to the higher classes. Surprisingly, the number of students in the classroom does not have much of an impact on the performance of students. The ranks remain in the same range even if the number of students range less than or greater than 50. In primary classes, girls score higher than boys in Raipur and Bilaspur, girls score lower than boys in higher classes in Bilaspur.

Status of admission for Academic Year 2021-22

- 29 districts
- 6511 Unaided private schools
- 3,01,317* total RTE students
- 83,006 seats
- 47,382* admissions processed

*As per data retrieved from the state RTE portal on 6th December 2021

Insights

1

Gender gap in enrolment, attendance, and performance

The number of girls enrolling under RTE has always been less than that of boys according to the data. Although the gap exists, the difference has significantly reduced over the years, especially after the online portal has begun functioning. On the contrary, girls outperform boys in the academic ranking in all the districts. The attendance of students, in general, falls in the 80–85% range. Gender gap is not reflected in attendance as it is in enrolment and academic performance.

2

Dropouts in elementary grades

The number of students dropping out during the academic year has remained consistently below 350 in the last three academic years, that is less than 1%. This is a huge reduction in comparison with the average dropout rate of 21.45% in 10 years. But the number of students who are not joining the classroom after admission has increased by 41% in the academic year 2020–21 compared to 2019–20. This can be accounted for by the effects of COVID–19 pandemic. The shutdown of schools during the country-wide lockdown has a potential impact on the dropout rate in the upcoming academic year as well. Given the lottery algorithm strictly follows factors such as distance to school, age of student, and documents to prove eligibility, the lack of availability of internet, smartphones and other resources can result in an increased attrition rate in the upcoming year.

3

Influence of language on academic performance

There is an evident difference in the academic performance of students with respect to their learning medium. Data shows students perform better when the medium of instruction is Hindi than those in English. This divide has to be addressed at the elementary level itself to accelerate the learning level of the students when they reach higher grades.

4

Centralized admission process and technology interventions

The online portal has been a boon in the RTE 12 (1) (c) admission process for the state since 2017. The MIS has brought in clarity and efficiency in the lottery system. Apart from increasing enrolment, it keeps the entire cycle of admissions transparent and efficient. Through this, parents can select from all the available schools in order of their preference. The involvement of nodal officers allows for the decentralization of the process and eases document verification.

Grievance redressal mechanism is made accessible to all stakeholders through registration on the portal, helpline number and emails. The helpline number provides an option for parents' to resolve their queries regarding the admission process. The redressal calls, especially during the admission cycle, address questions about timelines, technological issues and other issues. There is an option to register complaints directly on the portal where the complainant can view the status of the complaint resolving. As per data retrieved in October 2021, there have been 4173 complaints registered to the MIS portal since 2018–19 out of which 2763 are resolved with a completion rate of 66.2%.

There have been more than 8500 complaints received over mail in 3 years with less than 100 pending mails to resolve as on October 2021. The calls received on the helpline number are identified and categorized into various stages of the RTE admission cycle, such

as application, lottery, admission, and retention. As per October 2021, the helpline number received a total of 27222 missed calls of which 8993 are unique calls accounting to the latest admission cycle. 58% calls are addressed by the calling team and the rest are in progress.

5

Reimbursements

The amount incurred for each 12(1)(c) seat is reimbursed by the state to the schools. The process has undergone interventions, especially since the last three years, to improve the delays and reduce the time lapsed in the transfer of the amount to the beneficiary. The reimbursement is initiated by the Centre to the state, state to district, and district to schools. The amount transfer status can be tracked using the online portal that increases the transparency.

According to the PAB minutes, there is a significant gap between the proposed reimbursement amount towards the expenditure incurred for admission under RTE 12 (1) (c) and the final approved outlay. In 2019–20, only 29.15% of the expenditure incurred by the state was approved for reimbursement. The reimbursement amount proposed by PAB in 2020–21 is almost Rs. 92.7 cr. covering expenditure of private unaided schools for the academic sessions from 2014–15 to 2019–20. Expenses incurred during academic sessions 2014–15 to 2019–20 across the state have been cleared, to the tune of Rs. 161.5 cr. in 2020–21.

Recommendations

Here are a few recommendations that can improve the current state of RTE 12 (1)(c) implementation in the coming years.

Reimbursement

Although the transparency of the reimbursement process has increased, the time the amount takes to reach the accounts of schools has witnessed a huge delay. This increases the financial burden on the private schools and can potentially hinder the interest of the school management.
- To make the process more efficient, a timeline has to be decided for the process completion every year and a tracking and grievance mechanism have to be made accessible to schools.
- Expectation setting: Schools should also be aware that it takes a few months of checking before the funds can be transferred, and hence they should expect a few months of delay. Also, in case of erroneous data, there will be delays and hence it is the duty of the schools to enter correct data and the DEO's office to verify this prior to submission to the state.
- The shift to PFMS is extremely important, since it will ensure transparency in the center-state transactions and reduce the inefficiencies that the process otherwise causes.
- Institution of a Committee to determine the Per Child Cost expenditure is an essential feature for the state, since there have been very marginal changes (and none to the tuition) in the PCC in the past 10 years. A committee constituting stakeholders from the government, private schools, and parents, would be ideal for the same.

Social inclusion for Children With Special Needs and non-binary communities

The reservation of seats can be inclusive of students falling under CWSN category. Delhi has taken this into practice by providing a 3% quota within the 25%. Odisha and Uttarakhand also have lateral reservation. This requires prior steps including school infrastructure updation, faculty training, special educators, and awareness to nurture a coexisting mindset among the student community.

In addition, exclusively adding the non-binary community in the admission cycle as DG increase enrollment and provide better opportunities for those children. The addition of the "Others" option on the online portal while choosing gender is a welcome sign in this direction.

The data collected through the portal needs to be utilized well. We also need to find ways to optimize the data-collection exercise.

- Apart from the existing annual data collection on the student attendance and ranking, short qualitative studies to understand post-admission scenarios in schools can help to understand the reasons for dropouts.
- There should also be random spot-checks conducted by the nodal officers for different schools each year, to ensure that the veracity of the online data is verified.
- The back-end data systems of school registration needs to be merged, such that all private, unaided, non-minority schools getting a recognition certificate and UDISE code should get auto-enrolled into the portal, and get a message for the same. All details for the school can then be pre-filled from the same form, reducing duplication and increasing overall efficiency.
- The same data should not be collected multiple times from the schools. All information regarding this subsection of schools should be collected at one juncture and utilized wherever required through sharing of APIs at the back-end.

Research and Data Management

State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) being the appellate authority appointed by the RTE Act, should be actively involved in grievance redressal for all RTE-related issues. Karnataka and Delhi are 2 examples of active SCPCRs, which have helped resolve issues for parents and children by working with the Education Department.

Grievance Redressal and SCPCR

The data on the drop-out students is available through the portal.

- The State should utilise the mechanisms it has already instituted through the special bridge schools for out-of-school children, and ensure that these children are also brought back into the fold of school education.
- Difficulty in continuing education due to interstate and intrastate migration can be addressed by transferring the seat towards the recipient state/town from the unfilled RTE seats in the entry classes and can be looked at on a case-by-case basis for higher grades.
- Teachers should be encouraged to teach with a differentiated curriculum to address the different learning needs of children.

Age-appropriate special training for out-of-school children

Conclusion
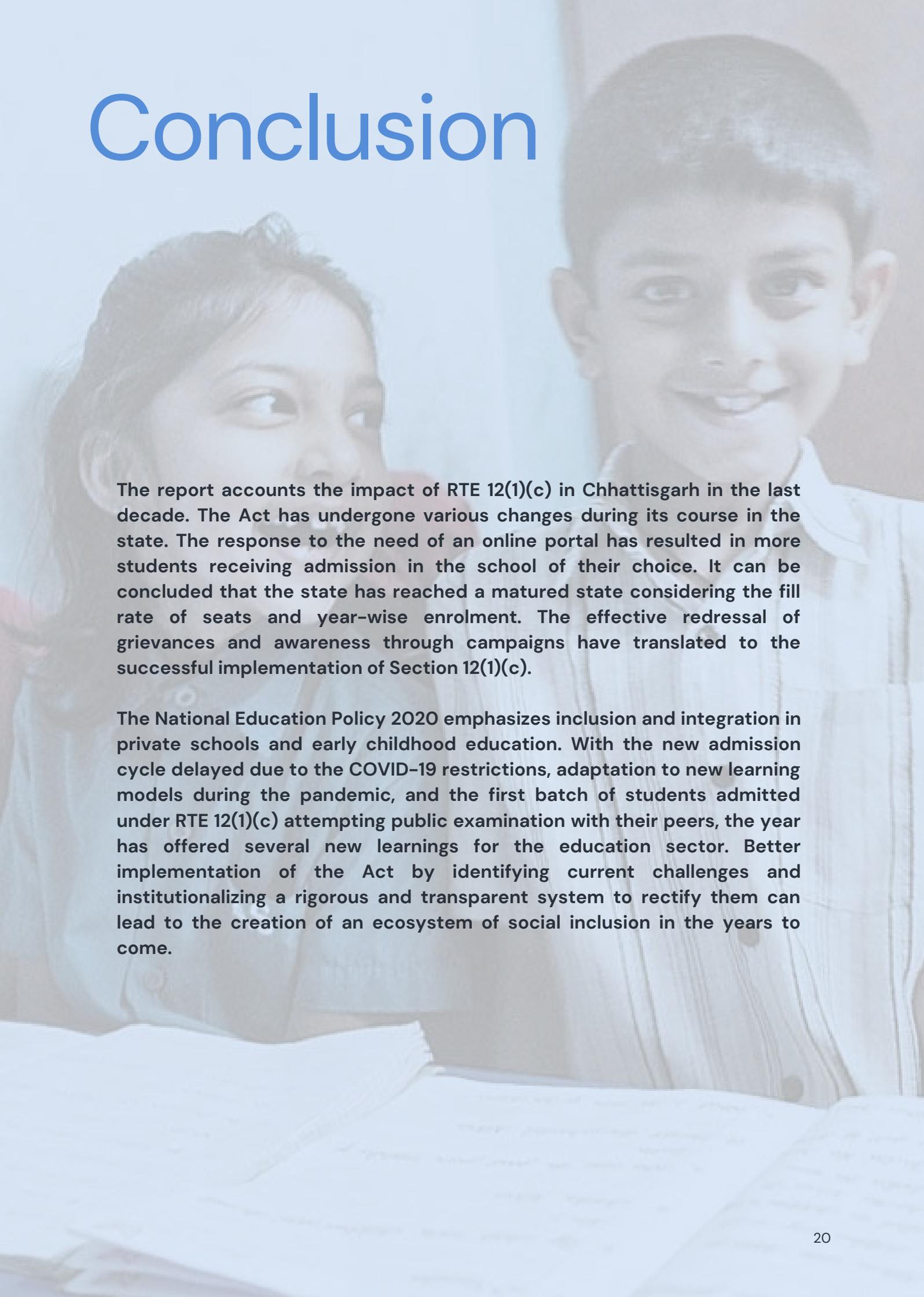
The report accounts the impact of RTE 12(1)(c) in Chhattisgarh in the last decade. The Act has undergone various changes during its course in the state. The response to the need of an online portal has resulted in more students receiving admission in the school of their choice. It can be concluded that the state has reached a matured state considering the fill rate of seats and year-wise enrolment. The effective redressal of grievances and awareness through campaigns have translated to the successful implementation of Section 12(1)(c).

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes inclusion and integration in private schools and early childhood education. With the new admission cycle delayed due to the COVID-19 restrictions, adaptation to new learning models during the pandemic, and the first batch of students admitted under RTE 12(1)(c) attempting public examination with their peers, the year has offered several new learnings for the education sector. Better implementation of the Act by identifying current challenges and institutionalizing a rigorous and transparent system to rectify them can lead to the creation of an ecosystem of social inclusion in the years to come.

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RTE Campaign

Glimpses of efforts to create awareness of the Act in the state.
Above is the screenshot of the RTE Online portal.
Given below is the pamphlet used for campaigns in schools and communities.

Training in Bilaspur, Training in Raigarh, Ground campaign in Rajnandgaon, Training of nodal officials in Balod, Training of nodal officers and private school administrators of Balrampur and Raigarh, Discussion with SHGs to form RTE helpline, Reimbursement being released by the Hn. Education Minister, Chhattisgarh, Indus Action's team with nodal officials in Durg and DEO operator in Dantewada.

"It is education which is the right weapon
to cut the social slavery and it is education
which will enlighten the downtrodden masses
to come up and gain social status,
economic betterment and political freedom."

– Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar