

# NEED TO ACCELERATE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Educational institutes must carefully nurture RTE, which has enabled choice and access to quality education for economically weaker sections, write **Sridhar Iyer** and **Tarun Cherukuri**

**A**n equal and easy access to education for vulnerable sections of our population is imperative for achieving the vision of UNDP Sustainable Goals of 'Education for all'. The Right to Education (RTE) Act passed in 2009 has played an important role in accelerating the country's progress towards this goal by facilitating parity in access to quality education. It has not only enabled the poor to choose between government and private schools but also helped both girls and boys have an equal right to education.

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outcomes. The retention trends in Delhi (among the students supported and admitted over the last two years) show that out of 4,924 children, who got allotted schools, 83% have remained in the same school. Only 3% of the children have

dropped out or switched schools, citing commuting as the prime reason, followed by ancillary costs such as books and stationery (0.57%). Only 0.42% of respondents cited non-inclusive teachers and peers as other reasons. It also showed that close to 30% parents expect support for their kids to improve their learning levels indicating the desire among parents to take ownership of their ward's learning.

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## RETENTION RATE

Many sceptics have questioned the impact of the policy — the fall in retention rate of Economically Weaker Section (EWS) children being a prime one, especially due to alleged 'psychological stress' that EWS children go through. We analysed the existing research and data and concluded that most of these doubts are unfounded. A paper by Vijay Kumar (IAS officer, Blavatnik scholar and DPhil, Public Policy, Oxford) last year provides empirical evidence that debunks myths that children admitted under reservation quotas are at a psycho-social disadvantage due to discrimination at schools. In a research conducted in Karnataka, significant improvement was seen in the self-efficacy of children belonging to disadvantaged social groups, especially girls, admitted under this policy.

The Annual Retention Survey conducted by Indus Action provides a closer look at post-admission