

## **Lack of Awareness: One of the Basic Challenges Faced by the Right to Education Act**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In order to universalize elementary education, Right to Education (RTE) Act was passed by the Indian parliament on August 4, 2009. However, even after 6 years of implementation of the Act, the objectives of the Act are far from being realized. Through this research, which was conducted in Hisar District of Haryana state (India), it was found that lack of awareness about RTE Act is one of the basic challenges faced by the Act. Irrespective of rural and/or urban origin, the majority of parents were unaware of the Act and its different provisions. On the other hand, teachers were well aware of the Act. Moreover, on analyzing the data, it was found that the roots of this lack of awareness about the RTE Act lie in the lack of family education, social participation, media exposure, and economic backwardness of the society.*

**Key words :** *Right to Education Act, Awareness, Challenge, Parents, Teachers, India*

The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well acknowledged. Access to education is critical to access emerging opportunities that accompany economic growth. Perhaps that is why the right to education is a fundamental right of a citizen as provided by the constitution of India under Article 21A. The Indian parliament, therefore, on August 4, 2009, passed the Right to Education Act, which came into effect on April 1, 2010 (MHRD, 2013). As per the Act, Right to Education (RTE) is now a fundamental right of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. In simple words, it means that the government will be responsible for providing education to every child up to eighth standard, free of cost, irrespective of caste, class and gender. The Act has three major objectives, namely, equality, quality, and universality in primary education (Saraswathi, 2012). Therefore it makes education a fundamental right of every child between the age of 6 and 14, and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools.

However, the disheartening fact is that even after 6 years of implementation of the Act, the objectives of the Act are far from being realized (Panagariya, 2013; The Tribune, 2015). Various researchers, scholars and thinkers have from time to time pointed to the different challenges faced by the Act. Garje (2011) discusses nine challenges faced by the RTE Act (Garje, 2011). Mehta and Kapoor (2010) in an article, 'implementing right to education Act', identify various problems faced by children in going to school, and further maintain that the provisions of the Act do not necessarily address the core issues related to providing free and compulsory education to children (Mehta and Kapoor, 2010). In order to implement the Right to

Education Act in letter and spirit, and to achieve all of its objectives these challenges need to be addressed. However, lack of awareness about the Act and its different provisions remains one of the basic challenges faced by the Act, reducing it to a mere piece of paper (Ghumaan and Sandhu, 2011; Business Standard, 2014). It seems to receive little attention from different scholars, and this needs to be addressed as well. Keeping in view this fact, we made an attempt through this research to find out the level of awareness among parents and teachers in Hisar District of Haryana state (India).

### **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive Survey Research Methodology was adopted to find out the level of awareness among parents and teachers in Hisar district of Haryana state (India). Out of total nine blocks in the district, Hisar-II block was chosen randomly for this study. In total, two rural (School-1 and -2) and two urban (School-3 and -4) government schools were selected randomly from this block. For the selection of respondents, three to four students and their parents were selected randomly from each class from first to eighth grade. Furthermore, all of the appointed teachers in all of the four schools were also selected. Thus a total sample of 100 parents, 100 students and 50 teachers were selected for this study. For the purpose of this study, 20 independent variables comprising of socio-personal, economic and communicational variables, and two dependent variables, awareness and perceived impact, were included. Three separate well-structured interview schedules were constructed for data collection from three categories of respondents i.e.

parents, teachers and students on the basis of objectives, and independent and dependent variables of the study. Statistical analysis of the collected data was done using the following tools: frequency,

35 years), and had low to medium family education status (94% in rural and 86% in urban area). The majority of the parents have children of both sexes (74% in rural and 90% in urban area). Fig 2 depicts that the majority of the parents (92% in rural and 84%

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

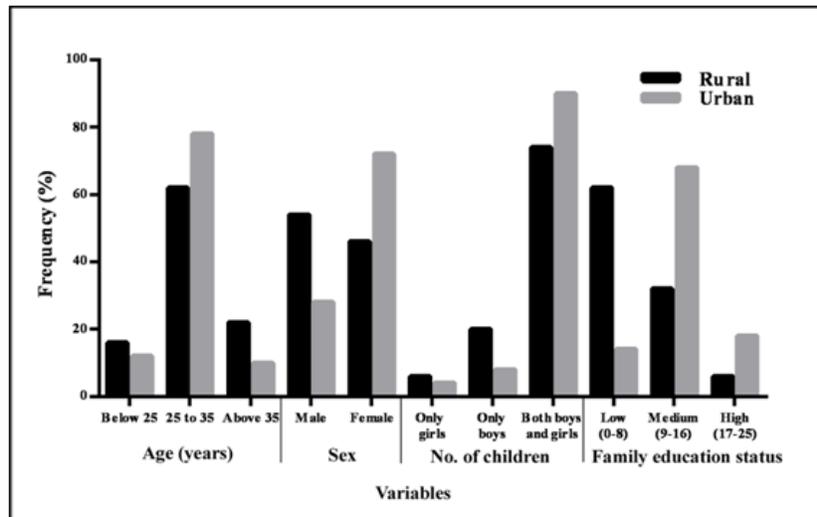


Fig 1. Socio-personal and economic profile of parents.

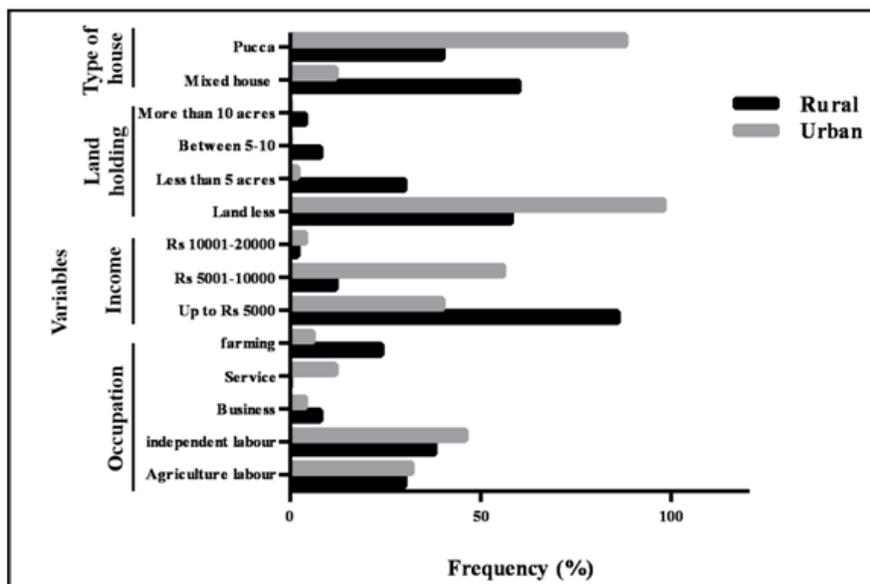


Fig 2. Socio-personal and economic profile of parents.

weighted mean, mean, standard deviation, student t-test and chi-square test.

It is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, occupation and many other attributes. Fig 1 and 2 show the socio-personal and economic profile of parents respectively. From Fig 1, it can be seen that the majority of the parents (62% in rural area and 78% in urban area) belong to the middle age group (between 25 to

in urban areas) rely on agriculture labor, farming or some sort of independent profession (caste occupation, small scale industry, construction work etc.) for their living. In rural areas, the majority of parents (86%) have a monthly income of up to Rs 5000 (~\$100), whereas, in urban areas, the majority of parents (96%) earn a monthly income of below Rs 10000 (~\$200). More than half of the parents (58%) in rural areas, and the majority (98%) in urban areas are landless.

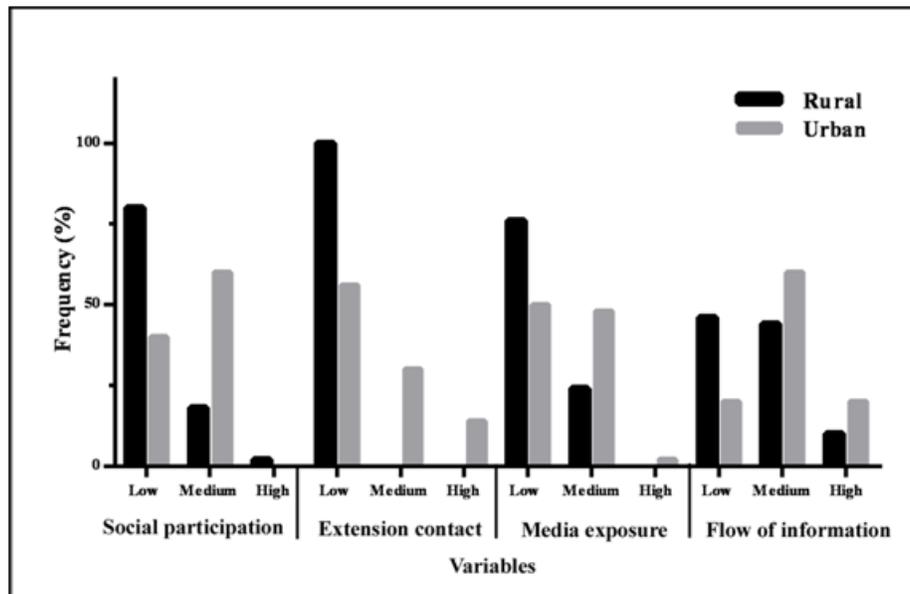


Fig 3. Communication profile of parents

As is evident from Fig 3, the majority of parents in rural areas have low social participation (80%), low extension contacts (100%) and low media exposure (76%). Whereas, in urban areas, all of the parents have low to medium social participation (100%), and the majority of them have low to medium extension contacts (86%) and media exposure (98%).

**Awareness of parents about Right to Education Act**  
**General awareness regarding provisions for students under RTE :** The general awareness of parents regarding provisions for students under RTE was very low. While most of the parents from both rural and urban areas have heard about RTE, it is

responsibilities of teachers. Only 13% of the parents know that teachers are prohibited from private tuitions under this Act. None of the parents know about the teacher/student ratio as fixed under RTE, and the fact that training is compulsory for teachers.

Only 19 per cent of the parents are aware about the fact that RTE encourages community participation, and only 5 per cent are aware about the provision of fixed student strength of the school. Less than half of the parents are aware about School management committees (SMCs) and the role they play in smooth and efficient implementation of RTE. Less than 15 per

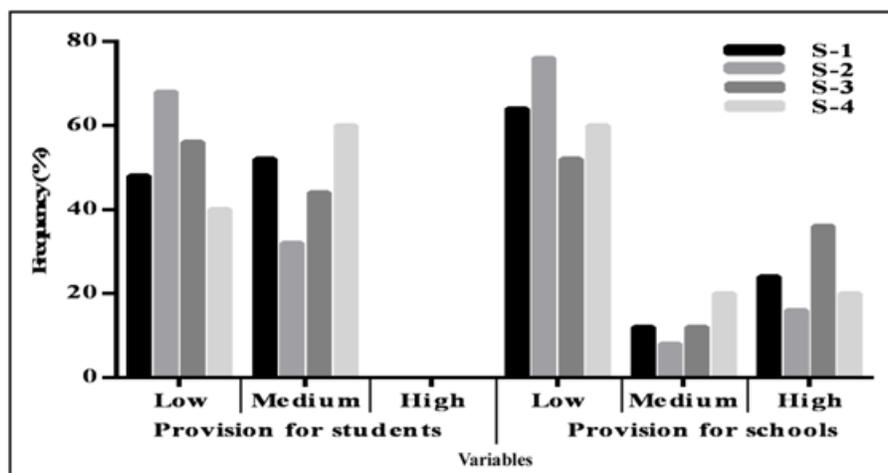


Fig 4. Awareness regarding provisions for schools under RTE

surprising that only less than half of the parents know about different provisions under the Act. Importantly, only 23 per cent of the parents know about the provision to train the untrained teachers, and only 26 per cent are aware about fixed academic

cent of the parents know about different criteria and provisions set out by the government under RTE to ensure that schools meet necessary standards of quality education. For example, only 10 per cent of the parents know about the minimum number of working days for

the schools, and only 4 per cent are aware of the seats reserved for economically weaker sections in the private schools. Likewise, only 15-30 per cent of the parents are aware of the provision of different school facilities and infrastructure as provided under the Act.

Fig 4 depicts the overall awareness of parents about RTE. It was found that 53 per cent of the parents have low overall awareness about RTE, and only 47 per cent have medium overall awareness. Importantly,

teachers (76.6% in rural area and 75 per cent in urban area) belong to the middle age group (between 25 to 35 years), but unlike parents all of the teachers have medium to high family education status (Fig 5). While in rural areas the majority of teachers have to travel a distance of more than 11 kms to come to school, none of the teachers in urban areas have to travel more than 11 kms (Fig 6). Less than half of the teachers in rural areas own a personal means of transport, whereas, the

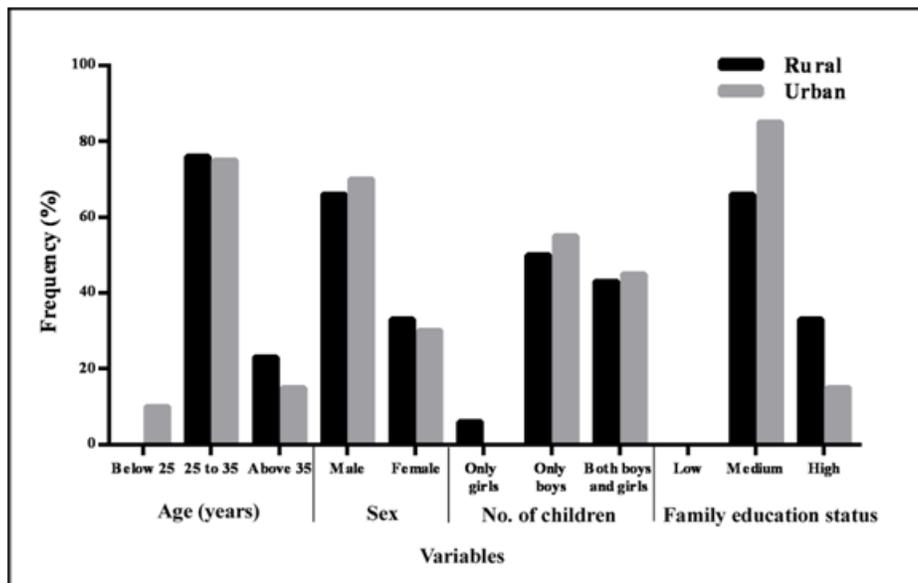


Fig 5. Socio-personal and economic profile of Teachers

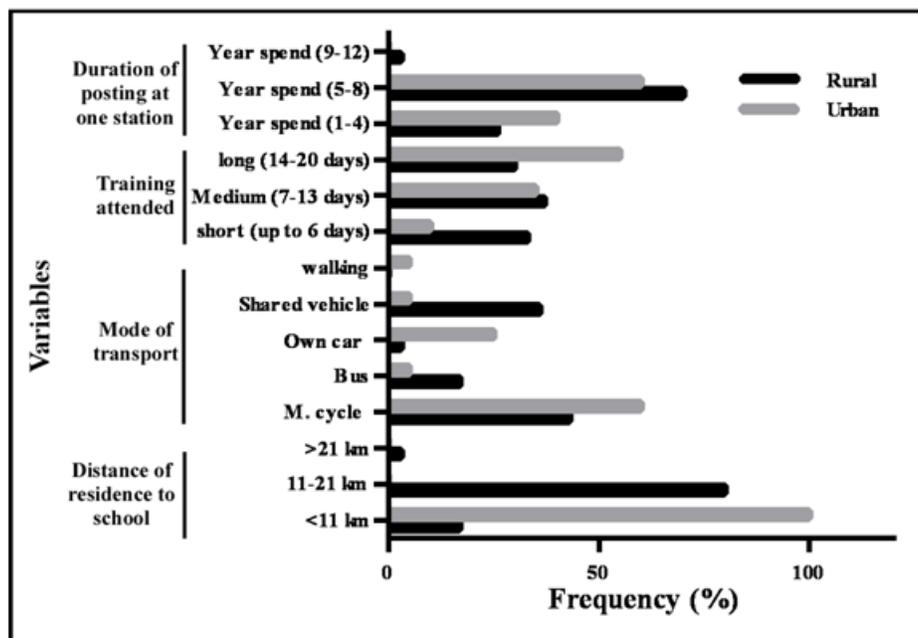


Fig 6. Personal profile of Teachers

awareness of none of the selected parents falls in the category of high awareness as regards provisions for students under the Act.

The socio-personal profile of teachers is depicted in Fig 5 and Fig 6. Like parents, the majority of the

majority of teachers (85%) in urban areas have their own motorcycle or own a car. More than half of the teachers (55%) in urban areas, and only 30% of the teachers in rural areas have attended long duration (14 to 20 days) in training.

The economic profile of teachers is depicted in Fig 7. All of the teachers in both rural and urban areas are in service, with the majority of teachers from both rural and urban areas (83.3% and 75% respectively) earning a monthly income of more than Rs 25000 (~\$500). More than half of the teachers from urban areas (60%),

urban areas have medium to high media exposure. Overall the communication profile of teachers is much stronger than that of the parents.

**Awareness of teachers about Right to Education Act** General awareness regarding provisions for students under RTE : In both rural and urban areas,

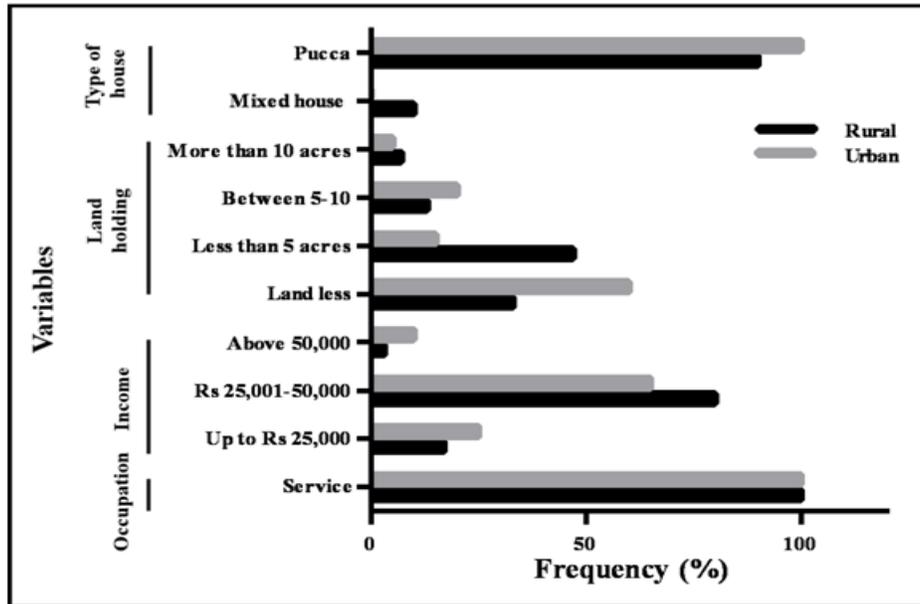


Fig 7. Economic profile of Teachers

but only 33.4 per cent from the rural areas are landless. Overall, the economic profile of teachers was found to be much better than that of the parents.

As shown in Fig 8, the majority of teachers from both rural and urban areas have medium to high social participation (93.4% and 95%, respectively), and medium to high extension contacts (86.7% and 90%, respectively). All of the teachers from both rural and

100 percent of teachers have heard about RTE, and are aware about most of the provisions under RTE. Regarding provisions for teachers under RTE, 100 percent of the teachers in urban areas are aware of the provisions for teachers like, ‘Fixed academic responsibilities of teachers’ and ‘Prohibition of private tuitions for teachers’. More than half of the teachers from rural areas are aware of these provisions.

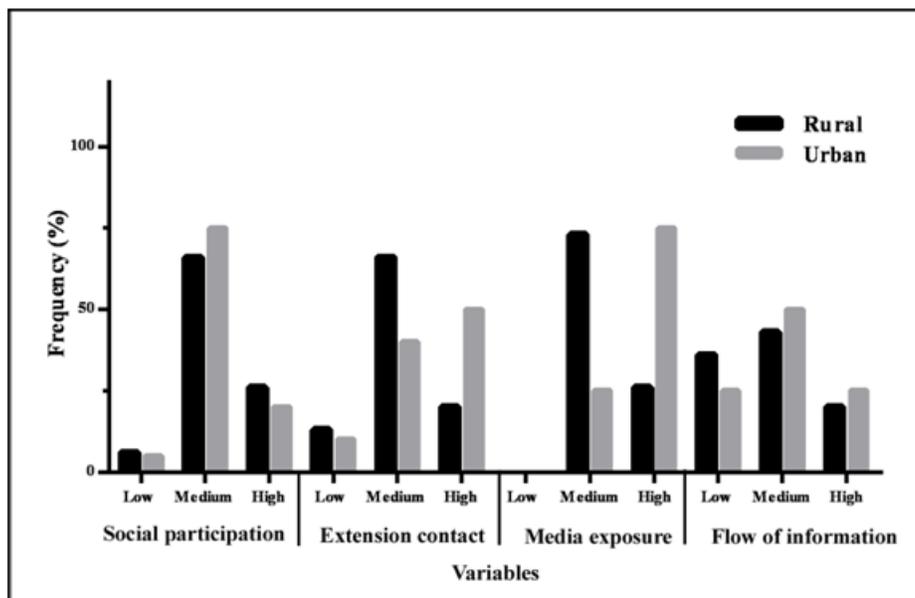


Fig. 8 Communication profile of Teachers

Similarly, the majority of the teachers from both rural and urban areas are aware of the provision to train the untrained teachers; teacher/student ratio as fixed under RTE, and the fact that training is compulsory for teachers.

**Awareness regarding provisions for schools under RTE :** The majority of teachers (84% in aggregate) from both rural and urban areas are aware of the fact that RTE encourages community participation. In both areas, 100 per cent of the teachers know about school management committees (SMCs). The majority of teachers are aware of the role played by SMCs in smooth and efficient implementation of the RTE. Hundred per cent of the teachers are aware about the

student-teacher ratio at primary level, and the number of working days mandatory for a school. Similarly, the majority of the teachers are aware about the provisions of different school facilities and infrastructure under RTE.

Fig 9 depicts the overall awareness of teachers about RTE. It was found that awareness of the majority of teachers falls in the category of high awareness regarding provisions for students (96%) as well as provisions for schools under RTE (76%). Together these results show that teachers from both rural and urban areas are much more aware about RTE than parents from both rural and urban areas (Fig 10).

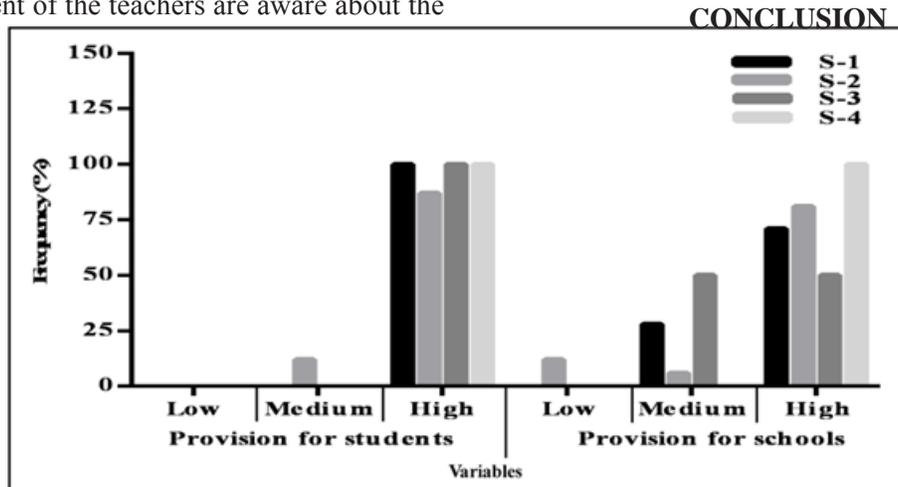


Fig 9. Awareness of Teachers about RTE

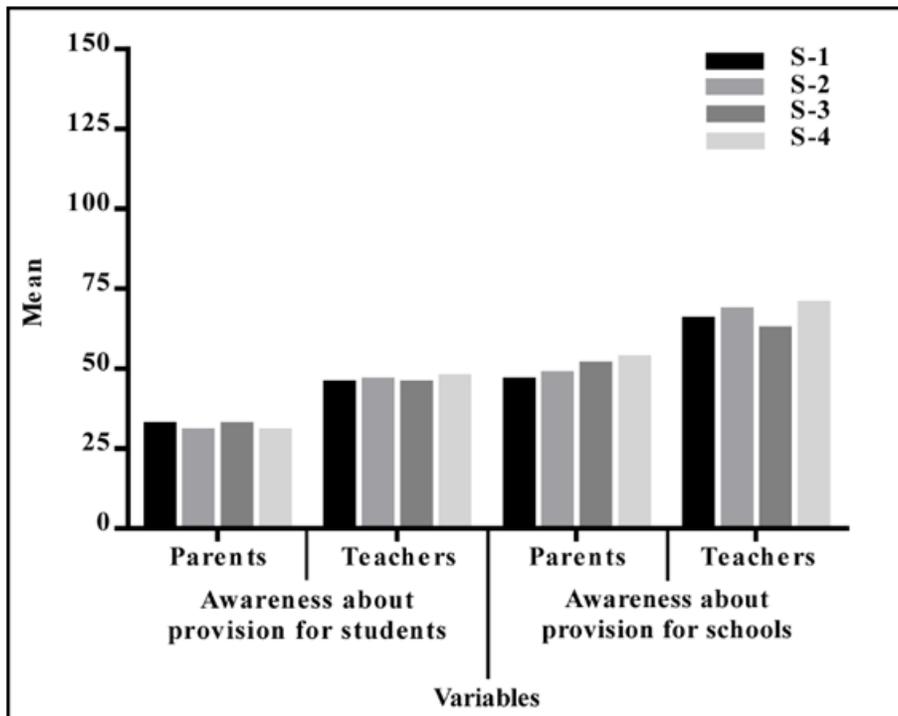


Fig 10. Awareness of Parents and Teachers about RTE

Different provisions as provided under the RTE Act ensure that all children get access to free and quality education, which in the short term can be appreciated as increase in enrolment of children in different schools. However, in the long term, and to ensure proper education for all, it is important to educate people about the importance of education. Parents need to be made aware about the importance of education, provisions of the RTE Act, and the benefits of the Act. Parents need to understand not only what their children can achieve through education but also how the government is ensuring that their children get quality education through this Act. They should be aware about not just the basic provisions of the Act but also those provisions provided under the Acts to ensure quality standard education.

In a developing nation like India, where, due to poverty and economic instability parents consider their children as earning hands, it is hard to convince such

parents to let their children go to school and not do labor, which provides immediate returns in terms of money, as contrary to going to school, which is a long term investment. One way out is to develop policies at legislative level to treat children as children of the nation and make sure that they complete quality education, fully backed by economic and moral support. Such policies encompass provisions more than the ones provided under the RTE Act, for example, the setting up of Child Welfare Institutions, which have the power and authority to take children into government custody, if their parents fail to ensure their proper care and education. Such institutions are not new to the developed world, and perhaps now is the high time for the developing world to frame such policies and establish such institutions.

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