

Equity Concerns in Elementary Education: A Study of BRCCs' Perceptions under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

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ABSTRACT

Elementary education is central to promoting social justice and inclusive development in India, particularly under the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 enacted in pursuance of Article 21A of the Constitution. The present study explores equity concerns in elementary education through the perceptions of Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCCs) in Balasore district of Odisha. Recognizing BRCCs as key academic functionaries responsible for monitoring, mentoring, and supporting schools at the block level, the study seeks to understand how equity-related provisions under the RTE framework are interpreted and implemented at the grassroots level. A descriptive survey method was adopted, covering all 12 BRCCs across the 12 blocks of Balasore district. A structured questionnaire comprising 16 statements related to gender equity, inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN), support for disadvantaged and minority groups, infrastructure facilities, and academic support mechanisms was administered using a five-point rating scale. The findings reveal that BRCCs largely perceive equity provisions as being effectively implemented. They reported positive outcomes in areas such as girls' enrolment and access to benefits, availability of separate toilets, timely distribution of textbooks and uniforms, scholarship support for Scheduled Caste students, inclusion of out-of-school children, provision of assistive devices and resource teachers for CWSN, and bridging gaps between social categories. The overall perception indicates structural compliance with RTE norms and a narrowing of gender and social disparities. However, the study emphasizes the need for sustained monitoring, capacity building, and reduction of non-academic administrative burdens on BRCCs to ensure that equity moves beyond procedural compliance to meaningful participation and improved learning outcomes. Strengthening academic leadership at the block level remains crucial for realizing the constitutional mandate of inclusive and equitable elementary education.

Keywords: Equity, Elementary Education, BRCCs, RTE Act 2009, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

Elementary education forms the foundation of an equitable and democratic society. In India, the commitment to universal, inclusive, and quality elementary education was constitutionally strengthened through Article 21A and operationalized by the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009). The Act mandates free and compulsory education for all children aged 6–14 years and seeks to eliminate disparities related to gender, caste, class, disability, minority status, and geographical location. By emphasizing neighbourhood schooling, non-discrimination, child-centered pedagogy, and provisions such as the 25 percent reservation for disadvantaged groups in private unaided schools, the Act envisions education as an instrument of social justice and equity.

Despite significant progress in enrolment and school infrastructure over the past decade, concerns regarding equity persist in the elementary education system. Disparities continue to manifest in terms of access, retention, learning outcomes, availability of trained teachers, inclusive classroom practices, and the effective participation of children from marginalized communities. Socio-economic inequalities, regional imbalances,

and systemic constraints often hinder the realization of the Act's equity objectives. Consequently, the implementation process becomes critical in determining whether legislative intent translates into meaningful educational opportunities for all children.

Within this implementation framework, Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCCs) play a pivotal role. Positioned at the block level, BRCCs function as academic leaders, mentors, and supervisory personnel responsible for supporting schools, monitoring teaching-learning processes, facilitating teacher training, and ensuring compliance with RTE norms. Their proximity to schools and engagement with teachers, headmasters, and local communities place them at the intersection of policy and practice. As frontline implementers and intermediaries between district authorities and schools, BRCCs' perceptions provide valuable insights into the practical challenges and contextual realities affecting equity in elementary education.

Understanding BRCCs' perspectives is particularly important because equity is not merely a policy mandate but a dynamic and context-sensitive process. Implementation involves interpretation, prioritization, and adaptation at the ground level. The ways in which BRCCs perceive issues such as inclusion of children with special needs, gender sensitivity, socio-economic disadvantage, teacher deployment, and resource allocation influence both administrative decisions and pedagogical practices. Their perceptions can illuminate gaps between policy provisions and field realities, as well as identify innovative strategies adopted to address inequities.

In this context, the present study seeks to examine equity concerns in elementary education through an exploration of BRCCs' perceptions under the RTE Act, 2009. By focusing on their experiences and viewpoints, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the implementation challenges and opportunities associated with promoting equitable education. Such insights are essential for strengthening policy execution, enhancing institutional support mechanisms, and ensuring that the promise of the RTE Act translates into substantive educational justice for all children.

The role and functions of Block Resource Centers and Cluster Resource Centers are very much important as these Centers are the main academic monitoring and supervising centers for teachers and schools. Hence, to strengthen the academic support capacity of the CRC Coordinators for the teachers and schools, the measures like; physical facilities, support from competent authorities; co-operation from colleagues; teachers' responsiveness, intellect utilization, management of conflicts, flexibility and independence, an opportunity for individual development, good remuneration, and a suitable posting location, among other issues, should be addressed with serious consideration and immediate action at the national level.

In Odisha, there are '314' Block Education Officers, '948' Additional Block Education Officers operating at the Block level, and '4806' Cluster Resource Center Coordinators providing academic support to schools as well as academic monitoring and supervision. The government has organized training or orientation programs to improve their capacity-building efficiencies in existing and creative areas of learning.

Rationale of the Study:

The role and functions of Block Resource Centers are very much important as these Centers are the main academic monitoring and supervising centers for teachers and schools. Hence, to strengthen the academic support capacity of the BRC Coordinators for the teachers and schools to take measures followed by immediate action at the National level. As a result, the major educational issues and problems faced by the BRC/BRP Coordinators need to be addressed properly. Besides, the quality initiatives are taken by MHRD, Govt. of India in collaboration with other Educational Agencies like NCERT, NIEPA after implementation of the RTE Act, 2009 such as NAS, PINDICS, NCSL, LEP, RAA, ShaGun, etc. on which the BRC Coordinators and CRC Coordinators should be oriented and trained for proper implementation of these quality initiatives at the grass-root level. The regular school visits by the BRCCs with providing on-site assistance to teachers was the immediate responsibility; whereas, they could not do it properly due to the administrative tasks assigned to them reported by Patel (2012), Singh & Kumar (2013); whereas many CRCC should not visit the schools and were not holding the monthly meetings at regular intervals revealed by Pradhan & Bagarti (2016) and Dash (2019). Training has a positive impact as per the opinion of

50% BRCCs, CRCCs, and BEOs for delivering the good in the classrooms by teachers ;lecture method was the common training method among the methods adopted during the training period with no use of audio-visual equipments revealed by Patel(2012), Gairola (2013). Proper planning of lessons and use of TLMs, implementation of CCE, classroom observation, conducting training and meetings are the major duties of both the BRCCs and CRCCs reported by Kurian & Singh(2018), Dash(2019),Gaur (2024), and Pandey et.al (2025).

Objective of the Study:

To determine the Perception of BRCCs about the concept of “Equity” to institutionalize a sound academic support system.

Research Questions:

1. Do the BRCCs give a clear perception about the Equity issues in providing academic support and monitoring of Elementary Schools?
2. Do the BRCCs give a clear perception about Equity issues in providing training support and supervision of Elementary Schools?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Panda (2007) in his study on the role and functions of CRCs in the implementation of SSA in Angul District of Odisha reported that most of the CRCs were unable to perform their role satisfactorily because of lack of infrastructure and required facilities. Mishra (2008) in his study on the CRCs' efficiency in offering academic help and ideas to Odisha's elementary schools reported that each sample school was visited 13.86 times by CRCCs to assist teachers and schools with academic support. AMC Research Group (2012) in its study on assessment of functioning of CRCCs in the context of the SSA program's implementation reported that the CRCCs in the Balasore District of Odisha were visited the Schools for their academic support to teachers, monitoring and supervision of schools regularly for bringing quality in elementary education. The CRCCs have received support from the BRCCs in the areas like monthly progress review, teacher training and completion of schools data, organizing cluster level meetings, assistance in community mobilization, and thrilling up monitoring formats.

The CRCCs were given pedagogical support to schools, conducted teacher training programs and the VEC/PTA/MTA meetings along with ensuring the enrolment of all youngsters aged 6 to 14 years old. Yadav(2012) reported that training facilities were not available properly and monthly CRC meetings were not conducted in States and Union Territories of the Country except Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Odisha,. In most of the States/Union Territories, the administrative issues like Pulse Polio Program, Mid-day Program, Staff problem, School record, Salary, Attendance, etc. were discussed instead of academic and training issues in the monthly meetings for which more than 50% of CRC Coordinators and Teachers were not satisfied with the proceedings of the meetings.

The States like TamilNadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, the academic training inputs such as teaching-learning process, development of Teaching-Learning Materials work in groups, use of Activity Cards, etc. were discussed in the monthly meetings. Patel (2012) reported that the BRCCs faced the problems like absence of a teacher's handbook, least interested CRCCs, and being busy with the different tasks from various fronts. Whereas the CRCCs faced the problems like identification of competencies among the teachers, lack of interest of teachers on activity-based approach and various overburdened assignments to provide academic support of teachers in their classroom transaction work. However, there is the necessity for special training for pedagogical materials and supply of reference materials to the CRCCs, he reported. Panda and Mohanty(2013) reported that the Teachers and Headmasters of Elementary Schools perceived the role of CRCCs more like data and departmental record manager than an academic facilitator although the absence of teachers has been reduced to a minimum; records and registers of schools were maintained properly; interaction of CRCCs with the community members was done due to visit and support of CRCCs.

Whereas, the academic support extended and demonstration lessons delivered by the CRCCs were no way different than their normal classes. The Head Masters of the elementary schools have admitted the help given by the CRCCs. However, the academic support given by the CRCCs needs improvement for quality in schooling in a healthy and conducive environment with the administrative control required for it and there is the necessity of inspiring community members and building CRC as a resource center for teachers has given low priority by the CRCCs he reported. Gairola, (2013) conducted a study on Management of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's Training and Skill Development Activities (SDA) in six Blocks of Dehradun and two developmental Blocks of Raipur and Doiwala in the State of Uttarakhand and found that the motivating level of 63% of primary school teachers, 77 percent of upper primary school teachers, 75 percent of CRCCs, 80 percent of DIETs and BRCCs is good; in terms of training methods, 77 percent of upper primary school teachers, 75 percent of primary school teachers find training methods to be good. Whereas, only 16% of upper primary school teachers rated the training methods are excellent with indicating the lecture method as common among them. According to the findings, none of the respondents said they used audiovisual resources in their training. However, with the stipulation that the modules are in the self-instructional mode, a gap has been identified between the planners and implementers of the training. The DIETs and CRC personnel believed that the training venues lack adequate space, toilets, boarding and lodging facilities, proper drinking water, electricity, and furniture; nearly 37.5 percent of CRCCs believed that teachers are dissatisfied with the training center facilities; nearly 50 percent of CRCCs, as well as all BRCCs and BEOs believed that the training has an impact on the teaching-learning process in the classrooms by teachers.

Mishra(2014) reported that the CRC Coordinators faced various problems while discharging their duties and most notably among these is non academic assignments given to them which must be reduced to a minimum and CRCCs have to give focus on training of teachers with giving them and to schools the academic support frequently. Pradhan & Bagarti (2016) studied on Perceptions, Problems, and Promises of Newly Appointed CRCCs in Odisha's Koraput District found that some CRCCs think that this is a good job to prepare report staying at home without making any visit to the schools rather they compelled the teachers and headmasters to come and submit their reports and documents at their residences. Whereas, some CRCCs did not go to their parent schools. The CRCCs are not free from more official formalities and documentation. They should be given ample opportunities to visit schools, deliver demo or model lessons, organize need-based local specific training and orientation of teachers, prepare supplementary textbooks, teaching learning materials, and conducting action research relating to issues of students, schools, and community members. Kurian and Singh (2018) conducted a study on school education regarding BRCs and CRCs in India and found that in most of the States and UTs, the CRCCs make a school visit either monthly or bimonthly. It is found that most of the CRCCs are making prior planning for school visits. However, the frequency of such visits should be increased so that they may extend academic support at different levels and bring about qualitative improvement. Proper planning of lessons and use of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), classroom observation, conducting pieces of training and meetings, etc. are the major duties pointed out by different CRCCs of all the States and Union Territories. Dash (2019) in his study on strengthening CRC as a forum for Continuous Teacher Development conducted in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha reported that CRCCs were not functional in the Blocks in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The monthly sharing meetings were not happening regularly and when held there was no academic discussion, rather 71 meetings were held for data collection purposes.

The CRCs were having a lack of ICT materials and resources and the CRCCs were not interested to conduct meeting every month due to lack of time. There is the necessity of regularization of cluster meeting through special agenda-morning assembly, review of the activities based on last month plan, technical session for conceptual clarity on any topic, resource generation for development of charts, big books, etc. issue solving session on pedagogical issues and planning sessions for the next month for which he stressed on Cluster forum. Elementary education as a fundamental right needs to be implemented in true letter and spirit emphasizing on conducive learning environment through academic support and training for teachers reported by Gaur (2024). There is the need to address the issues and challenges with reducing the shortage of teachers by providing academic support and training for teachers observed by Panday et. al (2025). Although the CRCCs were in the position to monitor the academic and training matters of the elementary school teachers they were involved in the administrative assignment in case of most of the State Govts. of the Country from time to time reported by Panda(2007), Yadav (2012), Gairola(2013), Mishra(2014), Pradhan & Bagarti(2016)

and Kurian & Singh (2018). Hence, they failed to deliver the good in the field of providing academic and training inputs to the teachers and monitoring the educational process as their prime responsibility. Therefore, the focus should be given on training of CRCCs as it has a positive impact on them to train the teachers on proper planning of lessons and use of TLMs, delivering the good in the classroom, implementation of CCE, use of audio-visual materials in the classroom teaching with conducting monthly CRC meetings to discuss on academic and training issues in the meetings reported by Mishra(2008),Patel(2012),AMC Research Group(2012),Yadav(2012),Gairola(2013) and Kurian & Singh(2018), Dash(2019), Gaur (2024) and Pandey et.al (2025).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The Study included 12 BRCCs covering all of the District's Blocks to get their perception on equity in relation to the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009. There are 12 BRCCs for providing academic support, training and supervision to the teachers and schools in a decentralised manner covering the “12” blocks in the Balasore District of Odisha. All the BRCCs were included as the participants of the study, which has been given in Table -1.

Table -1: Distribution of BRCCs as Participants of the Study

Sl. No.	Name of the Block	No. of BRCCs
1	Bahanaga	1
2	Basta	1
3	Baliapal	1
4	Bhograi	1
5	Khaira	1
6	Soro	1
7	Sadar	1
8	Remuna	1
9	Nilagiri	1
10	Oupada	1
11	Jaleswar	1
12	Simulia	1
	Total	12

A tool was developed by the researcher to investigate how BRCCs have perceived the concept of "Equity" in relation to the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009. The tool comprising “16” statements pertaining to Gender, CWSN, Disadvantaged categories and others, Educational facilities as per RTE Act, 2009 was used for the study.

The respondents were asked to put a tick (✓) mark in the appropriate provided against each statement followed by a five point rating scale- Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Indifferent (I), Disagree(D) and Strongly Disagree (S.D)

After getting the tool ready, the researcher visited BRCs to distribute the Questionnaire to BRCCs in order to examine their perception on the concept of "Equity" in light of the RTE Act's implementation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table -2: Perception of BRCCs about the concept of Equity for a sound academic support system consequent upon the implementation of the RTE Act , 2009.

Sl. N.	Statements	SA	A	I	D
1	Girls enrolled in Elementary Schools avail themselves of all the benefits extended to them Under RTE-SSA.		12 (100%)		
2	Separate toilet facilities for girl students are available in school and used.	12 (100%)			
3	All Free Textbooks and School uniform are timely distributed Among the Girls.	12 (100%)			
4	Scholarships meant for Girl Students are properly distributed to them.		2 (17%)	10 (83%)	
5	Scholarship facilities are provided to SC Children.	12 (100%)			
6	Out of School Children (OoSC) admitted in Age appropriate Classes are supported to catch up with the studies in enrolled class.	1 (8%)	11 (92%)		
7	Disabled friendly Environment is available in the school		12 (100%)		
8	Proper care and attention are given by the Schools for Children With Special Needs (CWSN).	12 (100%)			
9	CWSN Committee is functioning properly for educational betterment of Children with Special Needs(CWSN).		12 (100%)		
10	Various categories of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) are provided with Assistive Devices.		12 (100%)		
11	Availability of ramp with handrails for Children with Special Needs in the Schools is ensured.	1 (8%)	11 (92%)		

12	Resource Teachers are in position for dealing with Children with Special Needs.		12 (100%)		
13	All teachers have been provided with special training to deal with Children with Special Needs (CWSN).	2 (17%)	10 (83%)		
14	Gap between the education of boys and girls has been bridged up.		12 (100%)		
15	Gap between students of general category and students of disadvantaged groups has been bridged up.		12 (100%)		

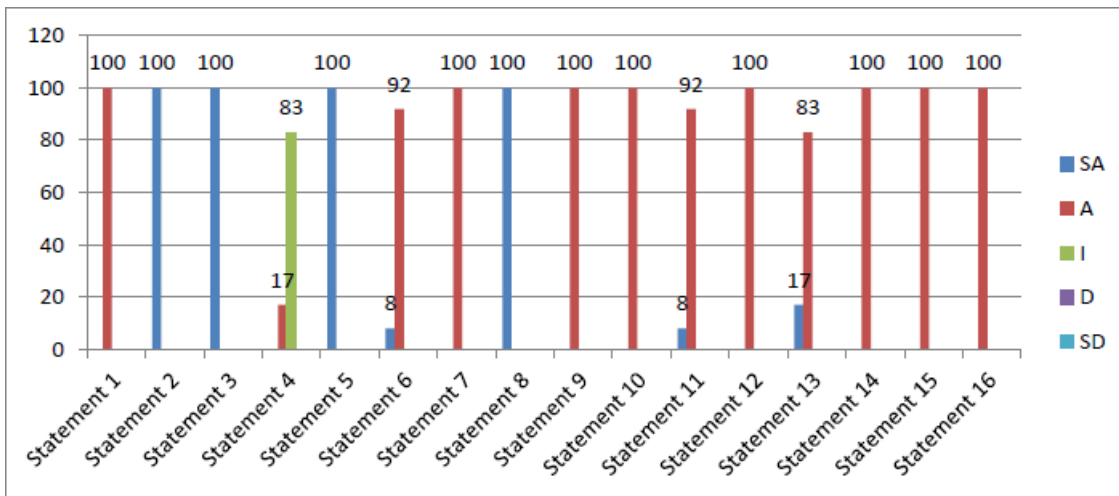


Figure 1: Perception of BRCCs about the concept of Equity for a sound academic support system consequent upon the implementation of RTE Act, 2009.

With reference to Equity; Girls enrolled in Elementary Schools avail themselves of all the benefits extended to them under RTE-SSA was agreed by 100% BRCCs; Separate toilet facilities for girl students are available in School and used was strongly agreed by 100%; All Free Textbooks and School uniform are timely distributed among the Girls was strongly agreed by 100%; Scholarships meant for Girl Students are properly distributed to them was agreed by 17% and indifferent extended by 83% ; Scholarship facilities are ; Out of School Children admitted in Age appropriate Classes are supported to catch up with the studies in enrolled class was agreed by 92% and strongly agreed by 8% ; Disabled friendly Environment is available in the School was agreed by 100% ; Proper care and attention are given by the Schools for CWSN was strongly agreed by 100% ; CWSN Committee is functioning properly for educational betterment of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) was agreed by 100%; Various Categories of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) are provided with Assistive Devices was agreed by 100% ; Availability of ramp with hand rails for Children with Special Needs in the Schools is ensured was strongly agreed by 8% and agreed by 92% ; Resource Teachers are in position for dealing with Children with Special Needs (CWSN) was agreed by 100% ; All Teachers have been provided with special training to deal with Children with Special Needs (CWSN) was strongly agreed by 83% and agreed by 17% ; Gap between the education of boys and girls has been bridged up was agreed by 100% ; Gap between students of general category and students of disadvantaged groups has been bridged up was agreed by 100% and the interest of the Minority Students is taken care of was agreed by 100% BRCCs relating to their perception on Equity with reference to the implementation of RTE Act, 2009.

The availability of all the benefits for girls enrolment in elementary schools with providing them separate toilet facilities for them in schools; all the free textbooks and school uniform are timely distributed among the girls with providing scholarship facilities to SC children ; out of school children admitted in the age appropriate classes are supported to catch up with studies in the enrolled classes;

disabled friendly enrolment is available with giving proper care and attention to the CWSN ;CWSN Committee is functioning properly for educational betterment of children with special needs and various categories of assistive devices along with the availability of ramp with hand rails are provided to the CWSN; resource teachers are in position and all teachers have been provided with special training for dealing with the CWSN ;no gap has been observed between the education of boys and girls even if between the students of general and disadvantaged categories along with taking care of the interest of the minority students were perceived properly by the BRCCs on equity with reference to the implementation of RTE Act,2009.

DISCUSSION

To the BRCCs about Equity, the availability of all the benefits for girls enrolment in elementary schools with providing them separate toilet facilities for them in schools; all the free text books and school uniform are timely distributed among the girls with providing scholarship facilities to SC children; out of school children admitted in the age appropriate classes are supported to catch up with studies in the enrolled classes; disabled friendly environment is available with giving proper care and attention to the CWSN;CWSN committee is functioning properly for educational betterment of children with special needs and various categories of assistive devices along with the availability of ramp with handrails are provided to the CWSN; resource teachers are in position and all teachers have been provided with special training for dealing with the CWSN;no gap has been observed between the education of boys and girls even if between the students of general and disadvantaged categories along with taking care of the interest of the minority students were perceived properly by the BRCCs on Equity with reference to the implementation of RTE Act,2009. As a result,the ultimate purpose of the RTE SSA Scheme i.e.Inclusive, Equitable Education and Education for All (EFA) will be fulfilled. The findings of this study is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Mohay&Woodhouse (2002), Sharma (2002), Mishra (2008), Kirupa (2011),Patel (2012),Singh (2013), Mishra et al(2015) and Mohalik(2017), Gaur (2024) and Pandey et.al. (2025). Whereas, the findings of the study conducted by ICMR,New Delhi (2012), Singh (2013), Julka (2015), Sharma (2017) and Dash &Mallick (2018) contradicts the findings of the study.

Educational Implications:

- Policies should be done on frequent monitoring of the Equity related activities in the elementary schools and planning have to be done accordingly to give the responsibility to the educational personnel- BRCCs/BEOs dealing with the grass root level.
- The Educational Administrators and Supervisors have to monitor the educational progress of the schools by ensuring the academic support given by the District resource groups to the teachers in different subjects.
- The Educational Administrators at the Block and District level like BEO and DEO should have to examine the Equity related matters carried out in the Schools as per RTE Act,2009.
- It is the task of BRCCs to supervise the Equity and Quality related activities emphasized consequent upon the implementation of the RTE Act,2009.

Thus, It is the task of Teacher Education Institutions dealing with elementary education to organize capacity building programs for the teachers, CRCCs, BRCCs, Community members on the policies and plans adopted for substantial improvement in elementary education with reference to the implementation of the RTE Act,2009

CONCLUSION

The present study examined equity concerns in elementary education through the perceptions of BRCCs in Balasore district of Odisha within the framework of the RTE Act, 2009. The findings indicate that BRCCs largely perceive the provisions related to equity, such as gender inclusion, support for Scheduled Caste children, inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN), minority welfare, infrastructure facilities, and bridging of social gaps—as being effectively implemented at the elementary level.

The responses reflect a positive institutional outlook that the gaps between boys and girls, general and disadvantaged categories, and majority and minority students have substantially narrowed. Such findings point toward progress in translating policy mandates into structural and procedural compliance at the grassroots level.

However, while BRCCs' perceptions indicate satisfactory implementation, the study also underscores the importance of continuous monitoring, reflective supervision, and sustained capacity building. Equity is not merely the presence of facilities or schemes, but the effective and meaningful participation of all learners in quality educational processes. Therefore, strengthening the academic leadership role of BRCCs, minimizing non-academic administrative burdens, and enhancing training mechanisms remain critical to ensuring that equity translates from policy compliance to educational transformation. Hence, the study affirms that BRCCs play a pivotal role in institutionalizing a sound academic support system that promotes inclusive and equitable education. Their positive perceptions highlight encouraging developments under the RTE framework, yet also signal the need for sustained policy support, accountability mechanisms, and professional empowerment to fully realize the constitutional promise of equitable elementary education for all children.

Ethical Approval

The study involved human participants (Block Resource Centre Coordinators). Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. The research procedures were conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for educational research. Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned educational authorities.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the findings or interpretation of the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to confidentiality and privacy considerations of the participants. The responses were collected from Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCCs) with the assurance that individual identities and institutional details would remain anonymous.

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