BACKGROUND

Even after 9 years of implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009, we have been able to implement it fully only in 10 percent schools across India. No attention has been paid by our Governments on the expected increase in budget for education. Even now we are spending only about 3-3.4 percent of the GDP on education. There are about 9 lakh vacancies of teachers in the entire country. Even today we are making do with infrastructure less, single teacher schools. Government’s negligence and policies that support privatisation of education have slowly pushed public education to an end. As a result of this, both teachers and education are going through a phase of danger. Under such circumstances, in order to strengthen the public education system in the country and to pull teachers out of danger, Right to Education platform is organising various national level programs. In the same series on 3rd February, 2019 a state level teacher consultation was organised in Almora, Uttarakhand.
PARTICIPANTS

In the state level teacher consultation program, Government teachers’ association, Government junior teachers’ association, Government primary teachers’ association and several social workers related to education and intellectuals participated. In the program almost 100 representatives from the state participated.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Welcome and inauguration

In the state level teacher consultation program, Government teachers’ association’s representative who has also received the President’s award, Mr. Kalyan Mankoti welcomed all the teachers. The representatives of various organizations and special guests were invited to the stage. Along with this, Government teachers’ Association’s representative and India Gyan Vigyan Committee’s worker Shri Neeraj Pant was invited to anchor the program. Program’s inauguration was done by chief guest, educationist and Almora Municipality President Shri Prakash Chand Joshi.

Context setting

After the welcome and inauguration, Mr. Raghu Tewari, the convenor of Uttarakhand RTE Forum set the context of the program and said that in today’s time both education and teachers are going through a serious phase. Education is not just about teaching and learning but also about lifestyle, civilization, society building as well as cultural and political development. It is important to look at education from a broader canvas today. If we do not step up to save education today, the doors of education for the poor and deprived class of the society will be closed forever. Higher, technological and pre-primary education has gone into private hands as a result of which parents have to spend a large part of their salary on education. The present procedures and system in the country are against the values of the constitution. Our constitution is based on the values of sameness and equality but the current face of education in the country is against the values of the constitution. In the entire country, 9 Lakh teacher posts are over as a result of which education as a profession is also suffering. Teachers need to discuss this particular issue. We need to raise this bigger question through our small demands. As per the Kothari commission 6% of the GDP should be spent on education but the Government manages to spend only 3.4% and practically spends nothing. Whatever the government spends is spent on the privatisation of education.

There was an amendment made in the RTE Act section 16 on 10th December,2018 as per which the provision of no examination in class 5th and 8th was ended. This amendment in the act has pushed back the fight for right to education. Since the implementation of the RTE Act our governments have not taken any concrete step towards continuous evaluation but by amending section 16 they have rendered section 29 also ineffective. After this Government has brought Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan, which only favours the privatization of education. All of this is highly problematic. Education is not just meant for employment but it is the
basis of a person’s socialization. The larger debate of education should be established on education itself.

**Statement of the chief guest**

Educationist and Almora’s municipality president, Shri Prakash Joshi welcomed all teachers and said that they were all there to address a serious issue. There was a need to discuss it for a long time. Coming from difficult terrains in the state shows that teachers who have come from those areas are committed to the cause of education. We all are struggling to decide what changes should be brought in the field of education. Education is a factory that manufactures people of the society. Since independence and until now much work has not been done in the field of education. Today the aim of education has changed. Education has become a business. Change in Government is bringing change in the curriculums, definitions, names and even history. It is the need of the hour that teacher associations come together. We are talking about our financial upliftment but there is a need to talk about and fight for the quality of education. Several commissions were formed regarding education but their recommendations were not taken seriously. We haven’t been able to achieve same curriculum for all schools in the country. The way schools have mushroomed in Uttarakhand, it is very difficult to give education a single face in the country. Privatization of education should end and public education should be strengthened and facilitated in the country. For this all teacher associations need to come together.

**Second session:**

The second session on “Right to Education Act in the present and challenges faced by teachers” was held in which the office bearers of various organizations deliberated and discussed upon various issues. Firstly, Teacher-leader Kailash Tolia said that it is the responsibility of Government to make education accessible. Right to education Act was enacted on 1st April, 2010 but even today it has not been fully and properly implemented. Compulsory and free education should be available to every child in the country. Giving education in private hands is the biggest mistake. In today’s meeting, let this message be sent across that the source of recruiting all teachers should be the same. If the source of recruitment will be the same, there will be unity among teachers too. He said that adhoc, teacher-bandhu, L.T., Guest teacher etc. like recruitments are weakening the education system. Teachers are also divided in various political ideologies as a result of which they cannot exhibit unity in the field of education. All teachers will have to rise above party politics and raise the question of education and teachers alone. We will have to decide what these teacher associations are for. The office bearers of teacher associations are not just teachers but also representatives of teacher associations. The medium of education should also be in the mother tongue so that children feel comfortable. There should be a national level curriculum and board.

Zila Minister, Bhuwan Chilwal said that the decreasing number of children in Government schools is the biggest problem. We need to think about why there is an aversion of parents
from Government schools. Like Delhi Government is endeavouring to save the Government schools, likewise Uttarakhand Government will have to provide infrastructural facilities, effective training and true implementation of the RTE Act in all schools. Only then will we be able to stop the closure of schools in the villages of Uttarakhand. The decreasing number of students in the schools is also because of the ending of the economic system in the rural areas of the mountainous regions. If we want to save education in the mountainous villages of Uttarakhand, we will also have to save environment, agriculture and employment.

Government High School Teachers’ Association’s State President, Shri Vinod Thapa said that Junior Teachers’ Association is committed to implement Right to Education Act. In every district’s junior school several posts are lying vacant. Circumstances are such that 2-3 teachers are running the whole junior high school. In some places there are no principals as a result of which children from villages are migrating to cities in pursuit of better quality education. Parents have to spend a lot as a result of this. There is a huge difference between teachers’ salaries and promotion. And so most of their time is spent in fighting these inadequacies instead of teaching. It is clearly stated in the Right to Education Act that teachers will not be deployed for any non-teaching work but from animal census to all other Government work, they are being deployed for everything.

Manoj Sah, President of District Chamoli said that teacher posts are constantly being ended in junior high schools. Government schools have become centres of exploitation of children. Not giving students their due subject teachers is a kind of injustice to them. The provision in RTE of sending 25% students to private schools is ending Government schools and in such private schools children are neither getting quality education nor is the goal of inclusive education being fulfilled. That is why the Government should roll back this provision.

Uttarakhand Government Teachers’ Association’s state vice president Mr. Mukesh Bahuguna said that teacher’s associations need to raise the fundamental question of education together.

It is the need of the hour that the issue of quality education be raised in a united manner by all teacher associations and quality education cannot be achieved till education is under the control of the Government. Education should be channelized through independent institutions like the election commission or any other constitutional institution. Government is not ready to implement the laws it has made for transfer and promotion. Neelima Bhatt of RTE Forum said that the irony is that in all the big and small elections of the country, education, teachers and children-which are some of the biggest issues of the country, vanish from the eyes of the politicians which is a major threat to democracy. Uttarakhand RTE Forum, CACL and ECD have launched a joint campaign to provide every child from birth till 18 years of age free and compulsory education, to fully eradicate and prohibit child labour and to ensure that every child goes to school. She further said that every section of the society should join this campaign and especially teachers should participate in it along with encouraging the SMC members of their school to join the campaign.
Human Rights Activist and senior advocate Mr. P.C. Tewari said that teacher is the leader of the society, he/she will have to come out of the mentality of a karamchari and accept the mentality of a teacher as well as raise the fundamental questions of education. Political groups have tried to prevent teacher leaders to play an active role by luring them by various facilities and other greed. With the help of teachers we can create a democracy favouring and equality based society instead of a society based on loot, inequality and struggle for power. The day teachers dedicate themselves to this cause, the democracy of this country will become people-centric.

After this there was an open session in which Rajendra Joshi, Minister of District Organization Almora, Dataram Bhatt, Block Minister Tihri Garhwal, Digambar Gaidi, President Junior High Teachers’ Association branch Gairsand, Pushkar Singh, block President Dwarahat, teacher Kalyan Mankoti, Keval Prasad Prashishu, Diet, Diksha Addikari, Kavita Gaida, Priyanka Lohani, Hem Joshi, Diet Almora, Govind Singh Mehra, Shashi Shekhar, Renu Negi, Sahiba etc. participated in the discussion.

In the end the following recommendations were made in the consultation:

- Right to Education to be implemented for every child from birth till 18 years of age and for this 10 percent of the country’s GDP to be spent for education budget.
- Public education to be strengthened and privatization of education to be brought to an end.
- Procedure for filling the 9 lakh teacher vacancies in the country to be started.
- Serious concern was expressed on the issue of privatisation of public education and higher education and it was agreed that favouring private universities at the university level and efforts to quash the University Grants Commission are all against democracy.