

ESTABLISHMENT OF RCL ELECTORAL LITERACY CLUB

PROPOSAL AND CONCEPT NOTE

INTRODUCTION

India is a democratic republic with a federal structure of governance. The officials at federal, state and local levels are elected by way of a systematic, free and fair election process. The Election Commission of India is the nodal authority, established under the Constitution of India, responsible for conducting elections in India. The voter strength in India accounts to almost a glaring 900 million voters, which is way more than the other democracies around the world. Every year the voter strength increases in India, by a significant number of youth crossing the age limit of 18 years and becoming eligible to vote.

As per the Census 2011, there are 14.2 Crore young people in the age group 14-19 in India. Given the registration and voting age of 18, there is a sizeable voter age population at 18-19 years besides an equally large population of the future voters in the age group 14-17 who would become voters every year next. As per the Census Data 2011, there are 9.68 Crore children in the age-group 14-17 years with 6.84 Crore in rural and 2.83 Crore in urban areas. Of these 6.97 Crore were enrolled in schools, with 4.76 Crore in rural and 2.21 Crore in urban. Also Census Data 2011, reveals that there are 30.52 Crore children in the age-group 6-17 years with 22.17 Crore in rural and 8.34 Crore in urban areas, of which 24.01 Crore were enrolled in schools, with 17.14 Crore in rural and 6.86 Crore in urban schools. The young and future voters, demonstratedly, constitute a sizeable part of India's democratic polity and its future.

In light of the above figures, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has realized the importance of electoral participation and literacy to these young prospective voters of our country. With this vision in mind, the ECI initiated a national programme in 2010 titled Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP). The programme mainly focused on voter awareness and information and motivation of voters for enhancing electoral participation of the voters in India. In view of the sustained efforts under SVEEP (Phase I and II), the voter turnout increased to 66.44% during General Elections 2014 from 58.19% during 2009 Lok Sabha Elections with substantial increase in voter turnout in assembly elections as well.

ELECTORAL LITERACY CLUBS

The ECI has decided to carry forward the efforts of both phases of SVEEP by moving into SVEEP Phase III. One of the strategic pillars of SVEEP III is 'Continuous Electoral Literacy and Democracy Education'. This phase is being build up with an aim of mainstreaming of electoral literacy among the young and future voters through the curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular interventions at the school, college and the university level including well designed coverage to the voter populations of that age group not covered under the formal educational system.

In pursuance of this, ECI has decided to establish Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELC) in educational institutions for strengthening the culture of electoral participation among young and future voters. The idea behind establishing such clubs is that they shall be the seat of learning through hands on experience and envisaged to serve as a vibrant hub of Electoral Literacy direct interaction in education and other institutions in the country. As a first step in this process, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi has established an Electoral Literacy Club and is working towards making young and future voters electorally literate.

ELC AT RAMAIAH COLLEGE OF LAW

It is proposed to establish an Electoral Literacy Club, as envisaged under the ECI Guidelines, at Ramaiah College of Law. The Club will work under the aegis of State Election Commission and at the Institutional level, will be headed by Dr. Manjushree Mishra, Principal, Ramaiah College of Law. It is proposed that the Electoral Literacy Club shall comprise of three regular staff members, one Nodal Officer and one student from each batch.

Out of the three staff members, one member shall be a member of the Research Cell at the College and the other two shall be faculty members. Dr. A Mumtaj, Research Officer, Ramaiah College of Law and Mrs. Nidhi Sinha and Mrs. Rhea Roy, Assistant Professors, Ramaiah College of Law will be the members of the Club representing the staff. Mrs. Roshni Sharma, Assistant Professor (Political Science), Ramaiah College of Law will be the Nodal Officer for the ELC. The membership of the Club for the students shall be on rotation basis and would be based on a yearly selection process.

The selection of the student members will be done by way of a Debate Competition which will be organised by the staff members on any topic related to 'elections in India.' The Competition will be held on the date assigned and informed by the Club and will be open to participation for all batches of RCL.

VISION

To make its utmost contribution to have an active democratic citizenry originating in integrated civic and voter education and electoral participation right from a young age.

OBJECTIVES

In furtherance of this vision, the Electoral Literacy Club shall be established at Ramaiah College of Law with the following objectives:

- To educate the targeted populations about voter registration, electoral process and related matters through hands on experience
- To familiarize the targeted populations with EVM and VVPAT and to educate them about robustness of EVM and integrity of the electoral process using EVMs
- To help the target audience understand the value of their vote to ensure that they exercise their suffrage right in a confident, comfortable and ethical manner
- To harness the potential of ELC members for carrying the electoral literacy in communities
- To facilitate voter registration for its eligible members who are not yet registered

- To develop a culture of electoral participation and maximize the informed and ethical voting and follow the principle '*Every vote counts*' and '*No Voter to be Left Behind*'

PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION WITH SPECIFIC TARGET ON KARNATAKA STATE ELECTIONS, 2018

February, 2018: Inauguration of the Electoral Literacy Club and selection of student members by Debate Competition

February, 2018: Intra College Survey on 'Electoral Awareness among I time voters'

March, 2018: Guest Lecture on 'Electoral Literacy in India'

March, 2018: Set up a wall magazine '*The Wall of Democracy*' and invite contributions from students on themes related to electoral-literacy and update it every month.

April, 2018: Phase I of Electoral Awareness Drive by RCL students for High-school students across Bangalore