

General Studies – 2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

No Detention Policy

1) Introduction

- Right to Education Act 2009 includes a no detention policy where no child admitted in a school will be held back in any class till Class 8
- The Union Cabinet has approved the scrapping of the no-detention policy in schools till Class 8.
- However, the students will have to be given a second chance before they are detained.

2) Why was scrapping No-Detention necessary

- Due to the fall in learning outcomes that translate into an over 20% dropout at Class IX.
- “Annual Status of Education Report” (Aser), which measures overall learning levels, has found that learning outcomes remain below par.
- Teachers lost leverage over students with many government schools turning into mere "mid-day meal" providers.

3) What went wrong?

- NDP was wrongly interpreted in which the significance of evaluating a school-goer's learning outcomes was undermined.
- Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) that aimed to assess the child's understanding is yet to be implemented in many schools.
- The already overloaded teachers were not given adequate training to undertake CCE.
- Less than 10 per cent of the schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.
- RTE doesn't offer any benchmarks for learning outcomes or link teacher assessment to student performance.
- Teacher shortages and lower quality of teaching and learning.
- Several schools which fail to build a playground and not able to satisfy 25% requirements as per RTE were closed in recent times.
- Under these circumstances, evaluating children on the basis of examination and deny them promotion is against the spirit of furthering education to the masses.

4) Supporters of the NDP

- NDP was successfully deployed in countries known for their high-quality education systems, such as Finland and Japan
- It will keep students in school and prevent dropouts
- RTE is a fundamental right guaranteeing free and compulsory education upto the age of 14.
- The fear of examinations hurts a child's developmental plans and does long-term damage.

5) Criticism

- Scrapping the no-detention policy (NDP) will weaken the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, substantially.
- Scrapping the policy would indicate the failure to improve the school education system, neglect of teacher education and bad recruitment policies.

- Danger of going back to a regime of early dropouts.
- Such a move can feed the pool of cheap child labour
- The move to scrap the NDP will make the RTE's goal of inclusive education a very difficult one.
- It will adversely affect the economically disadvantaged groups, who do not have access to private tuitions to improve their children performance.
- The detention will become an added disincentive particularly for girls. Parents will have a reason to marry their girl child which goes against Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- The children may suffer lower self esteem and consequent dropout, if they are made to repeat the same class.

6) Way Forward

- Rather than detain a child, skills training after the elementary level for those who would prefer that over academic studies.
- Such a model has served industrial nations such as Germany for decades, raising the standard of living for all, while ensuring economic productivity.
- Raising the quality of classroom teaching and continuous monitoring of teacher attendance
- We need to reform the assessment process, which we are doing.
- Improving the learning outcomes is the need of the hour
- A more open and liberal approach to schooling will have good long-term outcomes.
- The government must focus and improve the school education system and not to punish the students for the shortfalls in the system.

