

## Analyzing the No Detention Policy and its impact on the elementary education system



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### Analyzing the No Detention Policy and its impact on the elementary education system

#### Introduction

The second amendment to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act proposed by the Ministry of Human Resources seeks to amend the Act by diluting provisions which provides for a no detention policy in all government run schools until 8th grade. This was a demand unanimously made by 25 out of 29 states and all the education boards except NCERT. As highlighted by the disproportionately high rate of dropouts post elementary schools combined with low levels of learning, it was widely accepted that the No Detention policy was a failure in achieving its goal of universal education and enhanced pedagogy. Although it was hailed as a progressive policy bringing about a paradigm shift in the education system and aimed at transforming the learning space in schools, its half hearted implementation and erroneous interpretation ensured that the No Detention Policy was conflated with a system of no examinations and no learning.

The No detention policy was introduced as an integral and innovative provision which essentially implied no examinations in the traditional sense and instead mandated a process of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) to assess and evaluate the student's learning. The focus of the was to ensure that no child is forced to drop out of school due to poor performance or detention in the same class. The assessment methodology was shifted from an annual exam to CCE. The Sub Committee formed by the Central Advisory Board of Education to study the impact of No detention policy on education of children have highlighted that these provisions are misconstrued by different sections in diametrically opposite ways to imply the following<sup>1</sup>-

- There shall not be any examination from Class I to VIII and all children will be passed till class VIII without fail resulting in a care free attitude among students to study and that of teachers to teach.
- There shall be examinations continuously to test the child's knowledge at short frequency in place of traditional system of examinations on Quarterly, Six monthly and annual basis; and thereby the CCE has increased the stress and anxiety among children.

#### Conflating poor implementation with failure of policy

The Sub Committee had identified the following as the rationale behind the No Detention Policy<sup>2</sup>-

- To provide quality education to every child in the country with a guarantee to ensure expected learning outcomes within the academic year with required support systems.
- To provide a stress free environment to the child and motivate and encourage him/her to learn instead of focusing on clearing exams and obtaining marks
- Enhanced pedagogy, CCE, better infrastructure remedial classes and monitoring process will help create a scientifically approved method of learning and shift from the exam oriented approach.

Due to the skewed understanding and interpretation of the Act, these objectives have not materialized. Reducing dropout rates and achieving higher levels of learning were the major goals of the NDP. But the Act was soon highlighted as a glaring example of lack of preparedness to implement such a policy. Based on the high enrolment and low dropout rates in elementary education, it can be inferred that children are being retained in schools for longer. But it remains debatable if the policy has succeeded in achieving its stated objectives or has in fact opened up larger lacunae. While drop outs decreased in elementary school, it has been on the rise systematically in high school. It has promoted low accountability of teachers, lower learning outcome and poor implementation of the CCE structure of exams.. States have reported a lack of motivation in both teachers and students as there is no incentive for performing better, leading to deteriorating performance level. As the competency of teachers declined, children from the very sections of the society intended to benefit out of this Act lost out since they could not afford tuitions. It is argued that bringing back

<sup>1</sup>[http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>[http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf)

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examinations at the end of Class V and VIII would not only improve the quality of education by placing the onus on the teachers to put an extra effort through remedial teaching, it would also better equip the students for high school and ensure that they do not graduate from elementary school without any actual learning.

No political party has officially taken a stand on this issue although the large number of state governments supporting the motion might indicate that majority of the regional parties are in support of diluting the policy. Parties like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have made its stance clear against the NDP while states like Rajasthan has moved a Bill in the state legislature to amend the NDP as specified in the RTE Act since education is a state subject. Ironically, the states clamoring for the repeal of the NDP are the ones who have been marked the poorest in terms of implementation, pupil-teacher ratio and student absenteeism.<sup>3</sup> The only four states that have taken a position in favor of retaining NDP are Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana and Maharashtra. Incidentally, all these states rate high in terms of literacy as well as low gender disparity as compared to the BIMARU states which recorded an annual average dropout of 18%-20%, higher than the national average. Dropout rates of girls display the socio-economic position of girls in these societies as their dropout rates drastically increased to around 28%. In MP, 28% of girls in the age group 15-16 years were dropouts, compared to 19.4% of boys. In Gujarat, 22.5% of girls were dropouts compared to 16.3% of boys.<sup>4</sup> The significantly larger number of girl dropouts could point towards a possibility that the increasing dropout rates cannot wholly be attributed to the NDP.

The considerably better performance by the South Indian states in the education parameter should encourage the other states to emulate their model and develop a stronger education model in their own states. The success rates of NDP vary from state to state and do not universally reflect low student and teacher motivation and rising drop outs highlighting the fact that the positive outcomes depend largely on policy implementation. The state governments should focus on the better management of the schools and its functioning rather than attempting another change in policy. However, insistence of most state governments and major political parties will most likely ensure that the amendment is almost unanimously passed in the Lok Sabha.

### Rethinking the impact of NDP

Analyzing the impact of abolishing the NDP should be done by taking into account two basic premises and scrutinizing the debates around them-

- Could detaining students improve their performance?
- Can NDP be the reason for children dropping out in higher classes?

This requires an analysis of two keys issues:

#### 1. Adverse impact on students' performance:

At a time when the targets of the RTE remain unmet, it is important to examine whether detaining students could actually be the solution to better performance. As asserted by several educationists and academics, the no-detention policy (NDP) and CCE are based on sound principles of pedagogy and assessment, recognized world-wide.<sup>5</sup> While various government and other reports including the draft NEP 2016 raised concern about the poor learning outcome, the National Achievement Surveys has indicated the following factors as the main reasons behind school students' unsatisfactory learning curve<sup>6</sup>-

- Existence of a large proportion of schools not adhering to the guidelines laid down by the Act or are non complaint with the norms established.
- Student teacher absenteeism

<sup>3</sup>[http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/statistics/ESG2016\\_0.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/ESG2016_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Annual Status of Educational Research Survey available at [http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202016/aser\\_2016.pdf](http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202016/aser_2016.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Nivedita Rao, Rethinking the No Detention Policy, PRS blog available at <http://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/?author=1001005>

<sup>6</sup>National Achievement Survey, Class V (Cycle 3) Subject Wise Reports, 2014, [http://www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/esd/pdf/NationalReport\\_subjectwise.pdf](http://www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/esd/pdf/NationalReport_subjectwise.pdf)

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- Serious gaps in teacher motivation resulting in deficiencies in the teachers' performance and quality of teaching
- Slow progress in use of technology and lack of requisite resources for proper implementation

According to this survey, with the exception of student absenteeism, no other factor is linked to the policy of no detention for poor learning outcomes of students. It essentially reflects loopholes in teacher training, regulation, management and monitoring. Activists in the education sector also believe that students are not to be blamed for the poor performance and a reintroduction of the detention policy in primary schools would result in massive drop outs which the draft Bill does not have provision to handle. India has made significant strides in decreasing school dropouts and maximizing access to education. An amendment such as this might reverse that entire progress.<sup>7</sup> The concept of NDP also has strong underlying equity considerations especially for children from low-income families, and girls since failure for these children implies dropping out as is outlined by the MHRD statement on No detention policy as well.<sup>8</sup> The provision of no examinations and thus no detention has been misconstrued by schools and teachers as implying no assessments. The specifications on CCE stipulated by the Act have not been met by most schools and teachers have not been adequately trained to carry out the same. Both these schemes are inter-dependant and mutually reinforcing and it is in this context that the policy must be analyzed. If properly executed, academics have validated the benefits of CCE over traditional mode of examination and detention. Thus, the solution to the problem might lie in improving the implementation capabilities of the schools rather than repealing a progressive policy.

### 2. Low rates of transition:

Various studies including the graphs above reflect that the transition rate from elementary schools to high schools dip drastically while picking up slowly post high school although this trend varies from state to state. Consequent to the enactment of RTE, enrolment has been 100% at the primary level. But while enrolment has been universal at the primary level, low transition of students from one class to another at progressively higher levels has been noted. This has resulted in high dropouts at the secondary education level, with the highest dropout rate being 17% at the class 10 level.<sup>9</sup> These graphs, depicting data of increasing dropouts post elementary school have been cited by the groups opposing NDP as the reason why NDP should be scrapped. What the opposition narrative has not considered is that students around that age, especially girls drop out for several other reasons as well. There have been numerous reports addressing the high dropout rates among girls post puberty due to lack of toilets and other hygiene issues. Boys from poor families are often forced to drop out because of economic reasons or because they have to find other jobs to help their families. Lack of easy access to schools has also been cited as a reason. States like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh have revealed a huge gender disparity as data suggests a larger number of girls dropout each year compared to boys. In MP, 28% of girls in the age group 15-16 years were dropouts, compared to 19.4% of boys. In Gujarat, 22.5% of girls were dropouts compared to 16.3% of boys.<sup>10</sup> It should also be taken into consideration that the dropout rates are far higher for students from Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes, which brings into picture the role of caste and class among other things in determining the reason behind rising drop outs.<sup>11</sup> Education indicators are a function of several other factors such as socio-economic indicators, school infrastructure and the availability of teachers. This is evident from state-specific data on retention rates, which vary widely across the country and do not show a clear upward or downwards trend.<sup>12</sup> In view of the lack of clear evidence, the benefit of doubt must lie in favour of retaining the NDP. This is because of the vital role that it plays in eliminating the vocabulary of failure from the elementary education system, thereby securing the healthy emotional development of children. This is in keeping with India's international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jeet Singh, RGICS brief on Draft New Education Policy

<sup>8</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AssmntCCE.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016

<sup>10</sup> Annual Status of Educational Research Survey available at

[http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202016/aser\\_2016.pdf](http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202016/aser_2016.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/statistics/ESG2016\\_0.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics/ESG2016_0.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/551ea026e4b0adba21a8f9df/t/59faaca564265feb54cae830/1509600430177/171101\\_Vidhi+Submissions+to+the+PSC+MHRD+on+NDP.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/551ea026e4b0adba21a8f9df/t/59faaca564265feb54cae830/1509600430177/171101_Vidhi+Submissions+to+the+PSC+MHRD+on+NDP.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Article 29(1)(a) of this Convention states that the education of the child should be directed to the 'development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.'



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### Conclusion:

- Arguments against the NDP reflect the prevalent misunderstanding about NDP that it proposes a system of no assessment. NDP goes hand in hand with the CCE structure which allows for students to be assessed on non-cognitive as well as non-academic areas of learning. In this way, a child need not be 'failed' simply because of non-performance on a narrowly defined and rigid set of indicators. In the absence of a comprehensive evaluation and trained teachers to implement, a non detention policy becomes meaningless. It invariably results in lower learning outcomes. The common belief that students learn only under the threat of failure reflects that the groundwork for such a policy is incomplete. But this does not mean the policy is flawed.<sup>14</sup>
- The disorganized and hasty execution of the NDP and CCE by an unprepared government is evident in the number of anomalies in the policy implementation. Another drastic step to reverse it without wider discussions and consultations would amount to a retrograde step. The foundation of the education system has to be made ready for reform. Efforts to strengthen the foundation should be made instead of blaming the existing cracks on a new policy. Measures recommended by the Geeta Bhukkal subcommittee to improve the education scenario must be taken into consideration. Schools must be better equipped with qualified teachers and other resources.

A reversal of a progressive policy should not have been the step taken by the government to improve the learning outcomes of a student. A possible re-introduction of examinations in class 5 and 8 should not result in a chaotic restructuring of the education system already grappling with lack of resources and training. Instead the government should have focused on dispelling the common misinterpretations of the policy and constructively utilized it to advance a more scientific method of learning.

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10. Dhvani Mehta, Nivedita Saksena, Submissions to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on human resource development, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, November 2017 available at <http://www.vidhilegalpolicy.in/>

<sup>14</sup><https://thewire.in/8637/dont-make-the-no-detention-policy-a-scapegoat-for-poor-learning-outcomes/>

## Headline

### **Tamil Nadu's MGNREGA Workers Left in the Lurch Due to Delayed Wages, Unused Funds**

**Divya Karthikeyan, *The Wire* , November 16, 2017**

Tamil Nadu has forgotten to pay its workers the wages due to them under the MGNREGA scheme. Since 2015, the state had stopped releasing payments. A state that is hard at work and despite the highest number of person days amongst the five southern states, it had the most delayed compensation and the most payment delays, until July 2017. Government records show that Rs 441 crore worth of compensation was due to workers for delayed wages in the financial year 2016-17. Out of this, the government approved the compensation of only Rs 17.15 crore and has paid Rs 10.7 crore so far. The other issue is of unused funds. Tamil Nadu had Rs 161 crore of unused funds. All other states in the south had used more than their allocated funds under the MGNREGA, with Telangana having used funds the most, over Rs 800 crore in excess of allocations.

**Read More:** <https://thewire.in/197539/tamil-nadu-mgnrega-wage-delay-unused-funds/>

**Date Accessed:** 20 November 2017

## Governance and Development

### *POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE*

#### **90% MPs yet to adopt a village in phase-3 of PM plan**

Subodh Ghildiyal, *Times of India* , November 20, 2017

As many as 475 out of 543 Lok Sabha MPs are yet to identify the village they would adopt for development under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) .This indicates a steady decline in interest in the central scheme that was launched by PM Narendra Modi with much fanfare. Only 68 Lok Sabha MPs chosen villages for Phase-3 of SAGY in 2017 while a paltry 13 Rajya Sabha members out of 245 have named the villages they would want to focus on for development. Since the PM launched SAGY in 2014, it has been a story of constant dip in interest among MPs. According to officials, the source of indifference towards the scheme has been its design which does not provide for a budget but seeks convergence of existing schemes. Also, parliamentarians especially those from the lower House worry that picking one village in the constituency would trigger hostility among other villages and cost them politically.

**Read More:** [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/90-mps-yet-to-adopt-a-village-in-phase-3-of-pm-plan/articleshow/61717944.cms?utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=TOIDesktop](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/90-mps-yet-to-adopt-a-village-in-phase-3-of-pm-plan/articleshow/61717944.cms?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=TOIDesktop)

**Date Accessed:** 20 November 2017

#### **Deploying the Power of Social Protection to Improve Nutrition: What will it take?**

(Kalyani Raghunathan, Suman Chakrabarti, Purnima Menon & Harold Alderman, *Economic and Political Weekly* , November 18, 2017)

**Abstract:** The nutritional status of women and children in India continues to be poor. In this paper, [the authors] discuss how three major flagship social protection government programmes—the Targeted Public Distribution System, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act—can be made more nutrition sensitive. [The authors] discuss three potential approaches to making these programmes deliver better nutrition outcomes. These are strengthening governance and operations so that the programmes achieve their basic goals of improving food security and poverty; integrating nutrition goals and actions for each of these programmes; and leveraging the reach and scale of these programmes to also deliver specific nutrition interventions via these programmes, especially the TDPS.

**Read more:** <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/46/special-articles/deploying-power-social-protection-improve-nutrition.html>

**Date accessed:** 20.11.2017

### *HEALTH*

#### **India's Health Story Is One of 'Nations Within a Nation,' Says New Study**

Anoo Bhauyan, *The Wire* , November 14, 2017

The new government report titled *India: Health of the Nation's States* has studied 333 disease conditions and injuries and 84 risk factors across 30 states over 26 years. It also has specific chapters on every state, and policy suggestions. The report is the first time that disease and risk have been analyzed at this level of granularity, and then composed into a single comprehensive document. The comprehensive new report points to just that – health in India works at deeply unique sub-national levels. Thus data and evidence need to be more individualised, and policy interventions need to be bespoke. The report echoes the NITI Aayog Action Agenda 2017-2020 and the National Health Policy 2017 and calls for more decentralized health planning, which has been recommended recently by both. The conclusion is that large health inequalities exist among states.

**Read More:** <https://thewire.in/197022/every-state-distinct-health-story-need-individualise-policy-intervention-finds-study/>

**Date Accessed:** 20 November 2017



## Governance and Development

### Non-communicable Diseases Rise in India, Poor States still Grapple with Infectious Diseases

(Swagata Yadavar, *IndiaSpend* , November 14, 2017)

According to a recent study titled 'India: Health of the Nation's States, the India State Level Disease Burden Initiative,' published in the medical journal *Lancet*, as incomes have risen in India over the last 26 years, its burden of disease has seen a shift: in 2016, more deaths (61.8%) were due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, while in 1990, more deaths (53.6%) were due to communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional (CMMND) diseases. In 2016, the death rate from ischemic heart disease – the top cause of death in India – was twice as much as the next biggest cause of death—chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The other NCDs that caused the most deaths included stroke, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.

**Read more:** <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/non-communicable-disease-burden-rises-in-india-poor-states-still-grapple-with-infectious-diseases-69602>

**Date accessed:** 20.11.2017

## ENERGY

### Thermal Power Plants may Dodge New Emission Norms: Report

(Mayank Aggarwal, *Livemint* , November 17, 2017)

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change had come out with a set of emission standards on December 7, 2015 for the implementation of a strict pollution mandate across all thermal power plants in India. The new norms, which are due to take effect from December 2017, restrict emissions of particulate matter (PM), sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury and water usage by coal-fuelled thermal power plants. However, according to a recent report by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), India's coal-based power sector may seek to avoid compliance with the emission norms. CSE notes that the Central Electricity Authority is now recommending that plants be given another five years, which means the deadline to comply with the new norms should be extended from 2017 to 2022.

**Read more:** <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tut2cskM5CBF9aVptPDR6M/Thermal-power-plants-may-dodge-new-emission-norms-report.html>

**Date accessed:** 20.11.2017 **Date accessed:** 11.10.2017

## LAW AND JUSTICE

### Supreme Court of India Needs Transparency to Ensure Judiciary's Credibility

Kunika, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, Issue No. 46, November 18, 2017

The author talks about the history of the question of **judicial accountability** through important judgments like the controversial case of *ADM Jabalpur v Shiv Kant Shukla* (1976), and argues for a transparent system within the judiciary itself to deal with cases of judicial misconduct. Lack of judicial courage and integrity often stems from the flawed process of judicial appointment. In the Indian context, the collegium system upheld by the Supreme Court as the process of appointing judges to the apex court is also in need of enhanced transparency to ensure the judiciary's credibility which would also guarantee demonstration of greater discipline and accountability by the judges in the exercise of their intellect. She believes that judicial discipline coupled with judicial independence would definitely usher in an era of honesty where no case would ever be allowed to become a travesty of justice.

**Read More:** <http://www.epw.in/engage/article/supreme-court-india-needs-transparency-ensure-judiciary-credibility>

**Date Accessed:** 20 November 2

## Society

### *DISABLED*

## Lack of Facilities Keeping Disabled away from Higher Education and Corporate Jobs

(Devika Singh, *Business Today*, November 15, 2017)

The recently held National Convention of Youth with Disabilities saw a common apprehension amongst its participants: career prospects. Javed Abidi, Honorary Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), expressed his dismay at the non-inclusiveness of the corporate sector when it comes to hiring persons with disabilities. The situation is the same in the field of higher education. According to a survey by NCPEDP, in most of India's top colleges, only half a per cent seats are taken by disabled students – despite a quota of 3 per cent in all educational institutions for disabled persons under the 1995 PwD Act. The reason experts say is lack of facilities for these students. Abidi notes: “Giving admission is not enough ... Our curriculum is not accessible when it comes to blind people. Our teaching methodologies are not accessible. Our examination methodologies are not accessible.”

**Read more:** <http://www.businesstoday.in/opinion/perspective/lack-of-facilities-keeping-disabled-away-from-higher-education-and-corporate-jobs/story/263926.html>

**Date accessed:** 20.11.2017

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