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## Lok Sabha Clears Detention Policy

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Lok Sabha has passed the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018** to abolish the 'no detention policy' in schools.

- As per the amendment, it would be **left to the states to decide** whether to continue the no-detention policy.
- Under the **current provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**, no student can be detained till class VIII and all students are promoted to the next grade.
- The legislation aims to bring **accountability into the elementary education system**.
- This Bill provides for **regular examination in classes V and VIII**, and if a child fails, there is a provision to give her or him **additional opportunity to take a re-examination within two months**.
- If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.
- The **states will decide** at what level and who will conduct the examination.

### What is No Detention Policy?

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- No Detention Policy states that **no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled till s/he completes elementary education, which is upto Class VIII**.
- It is provided under Section 16 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 or Right to Education Act (RTE).

### Why was No Detention Policy introduced?

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- The provision was made in the original Act because **examinations were often used to hold back children who obtained poor marks**.

- To **reduce the higher dropout** rate especially among economically marginalized communities - it was felt that compelling children to repeat a class was demotivating, often forcing them to abandon school.
- The No Detention Policy was supposed to be part of the larger continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) effort which replaced the annual examination system.
- CCE mandates the assessment and evaluation of students' academic, social and personality development on a continuous basis.

## Challenges with No Detention Policy

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- In 2016, Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) had advised Human Resource Development Ministry for the scrapping of 'No Detention policy' on the ground that it was leading to lower learning outcomes.
- Teachers were ill-equipped to facilitate the implementation of the new methods of evaluation and in most cases the policy was interpreted as one that required no assessment at all. Less than 10% of the schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.
- The policy focused more on increasing the enrollment in elementary education and compromised on the quality of basic education.
- It led to lackadaisical attitude among students towards their studies, as they did not fear detention.
- According to the 2016 edition of "Annual Status of Education Report", less than 48% of children in class V can read a class II-level textbook; only 43.2% of class VIII students in rural India can do simple divisions; only one out of every four students in class V could read an English sentence. Several States and Union territories have raised the concern about adverse impact of Section 16 on elementary education.
- **TSR Subramanian Committee** on Education and the **Vasudev Devnani Committee** formed under CABE had recommended the revocation of No Detention Policy.

## Way Forward

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- Bringing back year-end examinations for Classes V and VIII and detaining students who fail will not improve learning outcomes on their own unless supported by other necessary changes in the educational ecosystem.
- The real solution to poor learning outcomes is socio-economic deprivation lies in improving quality of and access to education.
- Making teachers do their job better as well as fixing shortcomings in educational infrastructure and administration is the need of the hour.
- Raising the quality of classroom teaching, continuous monitoring of teacher attendance and introduction of free vocational and industrial skills training for all those with such an aptitude after elementary schooling should be the priority.