Concerns with Amendments to RTE Act

What is the issue?

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- Lok Sabha recently approved an amendment to the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Click here to know more.
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- Giving states the power to detain students who fail an examination in Class 5 or 8 would undermine the intent of the Act.
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What are the concerns?

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- **Guarantee** - The Act guarantees and provides for the continued presence of the child in school during the formative learning phase.
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- Thus, detention would weaken this significant, progressive feature of the RTE Act.
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- Detaining is unlikely to be an incentive, when social circumstances already make it hard to ensure regular attendance.
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- **Examination** - It will allow State Boards to declare a student failed and detain her on the basis of an examination.
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- But RTE Act assures that no child shall be required to face any Board examination till completion of elementary education.
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- **Dropout** - The NITI Aayog had found that bringing back detention in elementary schooling would increase the dropout rate.
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- This would impact the poor and Dalits the most, as they depend on government institutions.
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- **Drawbacks** - There are some genuine concerns on learning outcomes produced by India's schooling system.
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- But these are determined not only by a student's effort.
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- It depends on various other factors including:
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i. the number and quality of teachers
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ii. the processes for continuous assessment
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iii. the active engagement of parents and the community in encouraging excellence
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- It is the lack of attention to some of these determinants that has created a "broken" school education system.
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- Detaining already disadvantaged children can only break it further.
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- Any dilution of the RTE Act without sufficient thought will erode a major constitutional achievement.
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Source: The Hindu

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