No Detention Policy

Why in News?

Recently, Union government amended the Rules of the Right to Education Act, 2009 in December 2024 to allow schools to detain students in Classes 5 and 8 if they are unable to meet the promotion criteria after a year-end examination.

What was the rationale behind the original no-detention policy?

- **No detention policy** - RTE Act in 2009 stipulated that "No child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school till the completion of elementary education [Classes 1 to 8].
- **Remove pressure** - The spirit of a no-detention policy was to ensure that children can learn without unnecessary pressure.
- **Assessment** - Single final year-end examination is not the best way to assess learning and decide on their progress.
- **Reduce Dropout Rates** - The policy aimed to prevent children from dropping out of school due to exam failure.
- **Focus on Holistic Development** - The policy encouraged a shift from rote learning and high-pressure exams to a more holistic approach to education.
- **Continuous comprehensive education(CCE)** - It promoted continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) to assess students' progress.

  CCE or Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation is a process of evaluating the child's development in all the school-related activities stipulated in RTE,2009.

- **Encourage Inclusive Education** - By ensuring that no child is left behind, the policy aimed to promote inclusive education and reduce disparities in educational access and quality.
- **Societal disparities** – Wide socio economic disparity in the Indian society creates disparities in educational accessibility and learning.

Why has the no detention policy been rolled back?

- **RTE 2018 amendment** – It enabled the States to decide on the detention policy.
- **No evaluation** - Government schools in many States simply stopped testing in any form until Class 5.
- **Automatic promotion** - Promoting children without bothering to find out if they had acquired grade-specific skills and knowledge.
- **Lack of focus on outcome** - Monitoring systems focussed on inputs or maybe indicators, rarely on outcomes.

- **Alarming learning gap** - Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), found that only 42.8% of Class 5 students could read a Class 2-level text in 2022, a fall from 50.5% in 2018.
    - Only 25.6% of them could do basic arithmetic problems in 2022, a slight drop from 27.9% in 2018.
    - Quarter of the youth aged 14 to 18 years still cannot read a Class 2 level text fluently in their regional language.
    - More than half struggle with division (3-digit by 1-digit) problems, a skill taught in Class 3 and 4.
- **Continuous performance decline** - Out of a maximum 500, Class 3 students scored an average of 323 in language and 306 in Mathematics.
- By Class 5, the scores dropped to 309 and 284 respectively, and to 302 and 255 by Class 8.
- **Non implementation of CCE** - Efforts to introduce a CCE programme instead were largely stymied by a lack of resources and training, and teacher apathy.
- **High failure rate** - Failure rate in class 10 and 12 , ranges from 12% in national boards to 18% in State boards.

A government analysis of Classes 10 and 12 results across 59 State and national boards in 2023 showed that more than 65 lakh students had failed to clear their examinations.

What can be done?

- Better mechanisms to assess children's learning and hold teachers accountable must be created.
- There must be regular assessment done at the school level in every class, not at the board level.
- Specialised inputs needs to be provided by the teacher after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment.
- School Head must personally monitor the progress of the children who are held back.
- Rigorous teacher appraisal is needed to ensure inclusive teaching.

Reference

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