

Looking beyond revocation of 'No – Detention' policy



Section 16 of the Right to Education Act, 2009, provides for the Non-detention of children till class VIII, ensuring the promotion of the students to the next higher level class irrespective of their learning levels. This clause has surely done more harm than good, as is evident from the recent ASER report. A class V student was found to be incapable of doing simple math calculations such as addition and subtraction. FDR/Lok Satta was one of the few organizations who have brought to the fore the negative effects of this policy. Undertaking wider consultations with practitioners and educationists, FDR advocated few key amendments to the RTE, 2009 which included the removal of the No-Detention Policy (NDP).

Recently, more than a dozen State Governments have woken up to the imminent danger of deteriorating quality of Education and a few like Delhi and Rajasthan state Governments have gone ahead with revoking or amending the relevant clauses especially the NDP. However, many academicians and experts are against this move, as they fear that this would increase the dropout rates in schools. Also, they feel that the students are being wrongly blamed for their non-performance instead of holding the teachers accountable for failing in their duty to impart quality education.

A bit of number crunching shows an increase of around 40% absolute enrolment rates in private schools while there is a drop of around 10% in absolute enrolment in public schools in the past few years. One of the prime reasons being the poor quality of education in public schools and a general perception that private schools perform better. Although, the private schools are a notch better than the public ones, the ASER report reveals that even they have failed in meeting the expected learning outcomes. The problem at hand is a complex one and to address it we need a well thought out and a robust approach.

While there is a need for detention in a limited number of cases, the Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation widely known as formative assessments in the present form is unacceptable. Without providing adequate support systems to formative assessments, there is hardly any yardstick left to assess a child's ability. Hence, a multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted.

Firstly, the expected learning outcomes of a child are to be clearly defined. These defined outcomes will help teachers and parents gauge their wards learning levels and the desired levels to be met.

Secondly, an evaluation should be conducted in a relatively stress free manner by an Independent Assessment Authority (for class 3, 5 and 7 or 8) to check whether students meet the minimum levels of learning. These evaluations would help in assessing the quality of teaching and ensure progressive learning. The expected learning outcomes, minimum levels of learning and the evaluation processes should be standardized throughout and have to be updated time and again to make our education system effective and contemporary.

Thirdly, constitution of autonomous School boards at district/city level with a balanced composition drawn from School Management Committees, members of non-profit organizations, experts from the field of school education and government officials entrusted with key functions would ensure greater accountability.

Finally, the government should aid the students by reimbursing the school fees and also provide transport subsidies, allowing the parents to choose the schools in which they wish to join their wards.

Appointment Mechanisms of Higher Judiciary in other Democracies

Country	No. Of Members	Members' Background	Appointment of Members	Nature of recommendation-Binding or non-binding
 England Wales	15	Judges, Lawyers and Public	Open competition & selection by Judicial Council	Recommendations can be rejected only once
 France	12 including President of Republic and Minister of Justice ex-officio	Judges, Lawyers, Prosecutors and three laymen	Executive, Legislature and Judiciary	In theory non-binding, but President is limited to Council's recommendation. Binding for lower courts.
 Canada	8	Judiciary, Executive and laymen	Executive, Judiciary and the Bar	Non-Binding but Judicial appointments are made only through Committee's recommendations
 Germany	32	State Ministers of Justice and appointees of federal legislature	State and Federal Legislature (both upper and lower house and the executive).	Non-Binding
 South Africa	23	Ministers, Legislators, Lawyers, Law Professors and Judges	Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, Members of the legal profession like teachers etc.	For the Supreme Court it is non-binding, though President can ask for a new list only once. Binding for lower courts.
 Denmark	6	Supreme Court Judges, local court judges, and members of the public	Minister of Justice based on recommendations from legal (SC and lower court plenary) and public associations of high repute.	Binding in practice
 Ireland	10	Chief Justice as the President, Judges, Lawyers and non-judicial members	Nomination by Chairman of Bar Council or President of the Law Society, and three laymen appointed by the Minister for Justice and Equity	Binding on the Government
 Ontario	24	Lawyers, Judges & laymen	Nomination and selection by judges and minister	Non-Binding but judicial appointments are made only through committee's recommendations
 New York	12	Lawyers, laymen, Representatives of political parties.	Executive, legislature, judiciary	Only through committee's recommendations *Appointments differ from State to State, with no Appointments Commission at the Federal Supreme Court level.
Source: Resource & Advocacy Division, FDR				Sept 2015

Lakshallo Okaru

To improve the status of basic learning in the country, Pratham and ASER had launched a campaign called “Lakhon mein Ek” which aims to mobilize and energize volunteers in 1, 00,000 villages by January 2016 to fulfill its objective. The



campaign – ‘Lakshallo Okaru’ has been launched for the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The campaign envisages an alliance of institutions, NGOs, corporates, and foundations to involve the residents in assessing the status of schooling and learning in their own communities, and to resolve to improve the status through their own voluntary action, the alliance will also approach governments at various levels and law makers in state and national legislatures to persuade them to take steps to sustainably improve

learning levels reading, writing and mathematics in primary schools.

Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan had extended his support to this laudable initiative by Pratham and ASER which has developed teaching methodologies to improve the learning levels among the students. He also appreciates the organizations and the volunteers who are a part of this campaign. Now it's the time to lend support and strengthen such initiatives.

Easy & Accessible Education- The Khan's Formula

The strategic five-year partnership of Tata Trusts, as the lead founding partner with Khan Academy is a commendable move. They wish to leverage their technology prowess to provide free world-class education for anyone, anywhere in India.

Khan academy is a pioneer in offering practice exercises, instructional videos, personalized learning dashboards to the learners and also enables them to study at their own pace outside the classroom. Khan academy is now trying to address the issues related to education in India through various public and private partnerships to offer quality education to students, families and teachers.



The incubation phase of the program will focus on devising the product and content to serve urban middle as well as low income students aged 8 to 24 in select Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. Hindi and English languages are preferred in the course of incubation. They wish to translate their products and content into three vernacular languages- tentatively Marathi, Tamil and Bengali. Subsequently they plan to get involved in designing and piloting interventions for rural students in select geographies.

The main aim of this collaboration is to educate 450 million Indian students over next 5-10 years. Their decision to launch videos and exercises in Hindi across a subset of subjects – such as math for grades 5, 6, 7 & 8- aligned to NCERT is a welcome move.

Supporting this laudable effort Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan felt that this initiative is indeed very much needed in India, a country where school education desperately needs serious attention. A stern non-profit efforts & Public Private Partnership (PPP) models are essential to deal with the present concerns, such reforms embracing NGOs & focusing on outcomes are vital.
