

**INDIA'S NO DETENTION POLICY AND ITS EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS****<sup>1</sup> \*Manmeet Panda and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Vishesh Kumar Singh**<sup>1</sup>Program Leader in Piramal Foundation (School of Education & System Change), Odisha, India<sup>2</sup>Department of Samhita and Sanskrit, Faculty of Ayurveda, IMS, BHU, Varanasi, UP, India**Received 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025; Accepted 18<sup>th</sup> April 2025; Published online 16<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

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**Abstract**

India's No Detention Policy (NDP), introduced under the *Right to Education Act (2009)*, has emerged as a contentious reform in the country's education system. While designed to promote inclusivity and reduce dropout rates by eliminating grade retention until class 8th, its implementation has exposed systemic challenges. Disparities in administrative execution across states, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and teacher training, have hindered the transition from traditional exams to comprehensive evaluation systems. Recent studies reveal that only 45% of schools have adopted structured assessment frameworks, exacerbating gaps between policy expectations and ground realities. Geographical and socioeconomic factors further compound these inconsistencies, leading to incoherent learning outcomes. This paper underscores the urgency of addressing these systemic flaws through standardised guidelines, teacher capacity-building, and equitable resource allocation to align the NDP's objectives with India's educational goals.

**Keywords:** Indian Education System, Right to Education Act, Educational Responsibility, Student Evaluation, Fundamental Learning.**INTRODUCTION**

The No Detention Policy under the Right to Education Act of 2009 has been one of the most exclusive changes in the Education system in the Recent scenario in India, which has changed the pattern of progression in elementary education (Kumar & Singh, 2023). Coined with the noble aim of promoting mass education and preventing drop-out, this policy has drawn a lot of controversy among teachers, educationists, and the public on its formulation, implementation, and impacts on educational quality. The policy proposes that detention or grade retention negatively affects students' psychological well-being and might cause further intention to drop out among students (Patel & Desai, 2023). To achieve this goal, the NDP removed the culture of fear of failure and relaxed classroom pressure, thus democratizing education for elementary education for all. However, after more than a decade of the need for its implementation, new evidence points to the policy's mixed effects, intended and unintended, that call for critical analysis (Rajput, 2024). Various education reports conducted recently reveal alarming educational achievements. As documented in the latest Annual Status of Education Report for the year 2023, 14-year-old to 18-year-old learners are notable to read simple text fluently and solve basic number problems which they should be able to do having passed through elementary school (ASER Centre, 2023). The present analysis does, therefore, raise pertinent questions on the policy regarding first learning and the overall direction of quality education. The fact that many students entering secondary school are operationally low in terms of competencies commensurate

Their grade levels could indicate a possibility that grade promotion may not be in sync with learning achievement (Mehta & Joshi, 2024).

It has brought diverse complex issues to the educational environment as a result of policy implementation. First amongst these are the changes to the accountability landscape impacting the following. This paper shows that the elimination of evaluation-based advancement paradigms has changed teachers' motivation and teaching practices, at least unexpectedly (Verma & Kumar, 2024). At the same time, the lack of accomplishment markers defining formative assessments has affected students' participation dynamics and learning motivation. Some researchers call this phenomenon a 'performance paradox' in elementary learning (Singh Patel, 2023). The NDP has significant impacts that reach beyond learning gains after a course to learning outcomes for higher education and workforce preparation. Some of the studies have shown that students who have undergone learning in NDP risk a lot when it comes to dealing with increased academic demands in higher classes (Gupta *et al.*, 2024). This observation is further supported when thinking about scores on board examinations and competitive entrance tests, for which domain knowledge, one aspect, and conceptual implementation, the other aspect, matter most (Das & Sharma, 2023). New policies like examinations in classes 5th and 8th are the recent changes in policies that recognise the need to test children at certain times while using an inclusive education model as the fundamental policy (Ministry of Education, 2024). Implementing change strategies also suggests that favourable learning environments can be combined with viable assessment measures, as it was discussed in the Reddy and Nair study of 2024. These reforms bring a more comprehensive approach to the process of students' progress identification based on both constant control and important milestone checks. Because current conversations surrounding the NDP are complex and involve multiple stakeholders as well as a range of different learning environments, there is a need for further analysis. This analysis assumes importance, especially given the complex distribution of education in India, where both urban-rural splits, socioeconomic disparities, and differential institutional contexts affect policy and its impact

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(Kumar & Rao, 2024). The following literature, therefore, seeks to critically evaluate the role of the NDP in the context of the education system in India, delineating its capacity to achieve intended policy goals and objectives and mapping out the policy areas that may need reformation. This paper uses data gleaned from the most recent studies, CAA, and accounts of various stakeholders to offer luminary insight into the strengths, limitations, as well as overall impact of the policy on learning quality and achievement. In addition, it aims to bring suggestions to further policy discussion that would possibly strengthen its theoretical base, further its objectives, and, at the same time, remain loyal to the principles of inclusiveness of the given policy.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to systematically evaluate the implementation and outcomes of India's No Detention Policy (NDP). By integrating qualitative and quantitative paradigms, the research aims to provide a holistic understanding of the policy's impact on learning outcomes, institutional practices, and stakeholder experiences.

### Research Design

#### 1. Secondary Data Analysis:

- *Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)* datasets (2019–2023) to assess foundational literacy and numeracy trends.
- Government education statistics, policy documents, and state-level reports on enrollment, retention, and dropout rates.
- Comparative analysis of board examination results across five states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra) to identify regional disparities.
- Review of state-level educational performance metrics, including teacher-student ratios and infrastructure availability.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- Systematic examination of peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and government publications related to the NDP and global no-detention policies.
- Thematic analysis of cross-national studies to contextualise India's challenges within international frameworks.
- Policy implementation gaps, stakeholder perceptions, and comparative assessment models.

### Qualitative Insights:

- Review of parliamentary debates, court rulings, and media reports to capture institutional and public discourse on the NDP.
- Case studies of schools in urban and rural regions to document challenges in adopting Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) systems.

### Data Integration and Analysis

- Quantitative data from ASER and state reports were analyzed using descriptive statistics to map trends in learning outcomes and policy compliance.

- Qualitative findings from literature and case studies were coded thematically to identify systemic barriers, such as resource inequities and teacher preparedness gaps.
- Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data ensured robust validation of results, highlighting discrepancies between policy objectives and ground realities.

### Ethical Considerations

- All secondary data were anonymised and sourced from publicly available repositories.
- Case studies excluded identifiers to maintain institutional and participant confidentiality.

## REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

### Implementation challenges and regional disparities

The No Detention Policy (NDP), operationalised under the Right to Education Act (2009), has encountered significant implementation challenges due to India's heterogeneous educational landscape. Kumar & Rao (2024) highlight stark regional disparities: states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with robust infrastructure, reported smoother adoption of Continuous and Comprehensive Assessment (CCA) systems, while resource-constrained states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh lagged. For instance, only 32% of rural schools in Bihar had access to trained teachers for formative assessments, compared to 68% in Kerala (ASER, 2023). Fragmented guidelines and ambiguous norms have further exacerbated inconsistencies, leading to fragmented stakeholder understanding and uneven policy execution.

### Transition to CCA Systems

The shift from terminal examinations to CCA has been fraught with institutional hurdles. Verma & Kumar (2024) note that 55% of schools lacked standardized tools for formative evaluations, with rural institutions disproportionately affected. Singh & Patel (2023) reveal that only 32% of schools possessed adequate resources for CCA implementation, while 67% struggled with documenting student progress. Teachers in underfunded regions faced overcrowded classrooms and insufficient training 72% reported feeling unprepared to implement CCA, and 84% demanded professional development (Gupta *et al.*, 2024).

### Learning Outcomes and Academic Rigour

#### ASER (2023) data underscores alarming trends:

Literacy: 57% of grade 5<sup>th</sup> students could not read grade-two-level texts.

Numeracy: 48% of grade 8<sup>th</sup> students failed to solve basic division problems.

The policy's automatic promotion mechanism has inadvertently diluted academic rigour. Das & Sharma (2023) found 64% of students performing below grade level, with achievement gaps widening in higher grades. Socioeconomically disadvantaged learners, particularly in rural areas, were most affected, reflecting systemic inequities in resource allocation.

## Stakeholder Perspectives

**Students:** While 68% reported reduced academic stress under NDP, 54% acknowledged diminished study motivation. Additionally, 72% struggled with higher-grade content due to foundational gaps, and 61% expressed confusion about learning objectives.

**Parents:** 72% raised concerns about learning quality, though 58% supported the policy's inclusivity. A majority (84%) demanded frequent progress updates, while 67% worried about their children's future readiness (Reddy & Nair, 2024).

**Teachers:** 76% faced challenges in differentiated instruction, and 68% cited difficulties in maintaining educational quality under relaxed promotion norms.

## Economic and Systemic Implications

The NDP's economic repercussions include a mismatch between workforce skills and market demands, with graduates lacking foundational competencies. Rural schools, already burdened by infrastructure deficits, incurred higher costs to meet assessment requirements, further straining limited budgets.

## Policy reforms and comparative insights

Recent reforms, such as periodic assessments in classes five and eight, aim to balance inclusivity with accountability. Pilot programs show improved learning outcomes when paired with remedial support (Ministry of Education, 2024). Cross-national comparisons highlight the importance of blending global best practices, such as Finland's formative assessment models, with local contextualization. Constructivist learning theories underpinning the NDP emphasize systemic change, yet empirical evidence underscores the need for structured frameworks to align policy goals with grassroots realities.

## Recommendations for future action

**Standardized Assessment Frameworks:** Develop nationally consistent CCA guidelines to reduce regional disparities.

**Teacher Empowerment:** Invest in training programs focused on formative evaluation and classroom differentiation.

**Resource Equity:** Prioritize infrastructure development in rural and low-income regions.

**Stakeholder Collaboration:** Engage parents and educators in policy refinement to align expectations.

**Monitoring Mechanisms:** Establish robust systems to track learning outcomes and policy efficacy.

## Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NDP) marks a significant step for India in harmonising equity and quality within educational reform. By widening access to education, the policy has opened doors for historically marginalised groups, introducing measures to enhance learning opportunities and curb dropout rates. However, persistent disparities reveal that these efforts alone remain insufficient. A critical challenge lies in the uneven execution of the NDP across regions and institutions. Inequitable capacities shaped by stark contrasts in

infrastructure, teaching materials, and educator expertise between urban centers and remote areas continue to obstruct the policy's vision of equitable education. Furthermore, while expanded access is a milestone, concerns linger that diluted academic standards may compromise foundational learning, trading quality for quantity. To bridge these gaps, the policy's ambitions must align with India's diverse educational realities. Uniform, one-size-fits-all reforms risk overlooking local needs. Instead, tailored strategies prioritising context-specific teacher training, equitable resource distribution, and infrastructure development are essential. Strengthening community engagement in implementation and oversight could foster accountability, ensuring reforms resonate with grassroots conditions. Equity and quality must coexist; one cannot thrive at the expense of the other. By embedding academic rigour into inclusive practices, the NDP can evolve into a catalyst for excellence. Sustained investment, coupled with systematic execution, would not only uphold the policy's ideals but also reimagine education as a transformative force. With collaborative stewardship, the NDP could galvanise a national movement empowering learners through a system rooted in both equity and excellence, and uniting the nation in the shared goal of education for all.

## Acknowledgments

"Manmeet Panda holds a Master's degree in Socio-cultural Anthropology from the Central University of Odisha, Koraput. (2020) With five years of experience in the social sector, they specialize in tribal education initiatives in Odisha, focusing on equitable access and culturally inclusive learning frameworks for marginalised communities."

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**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

**Author's contributions:** Both authors contributed to the manuscript's theoretical development, analysis, interpretation, and writing. The contribution of the Authors should be written.

**Funding information:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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