

Amendments to RTE Act

Why in news?

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Lok Sabha approved an amendment to the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

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What is the significance of the RTE act?

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- RTE act mandates free and compulsory education for children between six and 14 years.

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- The idea behind policy was to curb the sharp dropout rates in elementary education.

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- Since it was argued that students drop out of school because of sheer demotivation when they fail in a class and that they should not be penalised for the failures of their teachers and lack of basic facilities in schools.

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What are the recent amendments to RTE act?

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- The latest amendment was a significant change since the no detention policy was one of the fundamental pillars of the RTE Act.

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- The amendment scrapped the so-called “no detention” policy, which ensured that no student could be held back (or failed) in a class until the end of elementary education (that is Standard 8th).

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What are the reasons behind such amendment?

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- While dropout rates under the earlier system did fall, it led to falling standards of educational achievement.

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- It was also found that the lack of education attainment meant that students in the age group of 14 to 18 struggled with foundational skills such as reading a text in their own language or solving a simple arithmetic division.

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- This poor understanding among students, in turn, led to a sharp spike in dropout rates in classes IX and X.

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- The general conclusion that emerged is that in the absence of detention, students had no real motivation to learn anything, nor did the teachers have any reason to make students understand.

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- The hope now is that such a trend would be reversed and both students and teachers would have a reason to focus on improvement.

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What are the limitations with Indian education system?

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- Long-standing systemic limitations include poor teaching standards, inadequate infrastructure facilities, lack of monitoring mechanisms, skewed pupil-teacher ratio, etc.

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- If a critical mass of good teachers has to be built, the only way out is to make sweeping changes to the way India selects and trains teachers.

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- For example, a mathematics test conducted on teachers showed that most of them could not even do simple maths and 64 per cent could not give a correct title to a paragraph in a language comprehension test.

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- Another report said over 99 per cent of Bachelor of Education (BEd) graduates failed to clear the Central Teacher Eligibility Test.

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- Unless these aspects are addressed, merely holding exams at the end of the year and detaining ill-prepared students will serve only a limited purpose.

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Source: Business Standard

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