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Research Article

No Detention Policy is a Sweet Poison for the Indian Primary Education System

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ABSTRACT

In the education system, primary education is a critical stage for the development of children. The government introduced the 'No Detention Policy (NDP) under the Right to Education Act of 2009', seriously affecting India's education system. According to a study (Chowdhury, 2018), the implementation of a "No detention policy" did not harm much on student's learning. However, when we statistically analyze the learning impact of students before and after the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education and its no-detention policy, we found that the no-detention policy has significantly lowered the learning level of students. This paper recommends that the No-Detention policy should be abolished from India's Education System.

Keywords: Primary Education, Right to Education, No Detention Policy, Annual Survey on Educational Reports.

Primary Education

After preschool and before secondary education, the first stage of formal education is called Primary Education or Elementary Education. Primary education usually takes place in primary school or elementary school.

In India, elementary schools usually provide education from Class 1 to Class 8, and the children in these classes are generally between 6 and 15 years old. It is the next phase after kindergarten (Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Prep or Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten).

Current Status in India

In India, about 100% of children between the ages of 5 and 11 are enrolled in school but are not enrolled in school. Even among enrolled children, attendance rates are low, and 26% of children enrolled in primary school drop out before Grade 5. The situation is usually worse among the poor and rural girls living in some undeveloped states, such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan (Mohanty, 2017).

Right to Education Act, 2009

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 introduced Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right (Goud, 2018). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, means that every child has a right to full-time elementary education of satisfactory and impartial quality in a formal school that fulfills certain crucial norms and standards.

The RTE Act came into force on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory,' which means that there is no direct (school fees) or indirect cost (uniforms, textbooks, mid-day meals, transportation) to be borne by the child or the parents to acquire elementary education. The government will afford schooling free of cost until a child's elementary education is completed. With this, India has moved forward to a rights-based framework that casts a legal commitment on the Central and State Governments to execute this fundamental child right as preserved in Article 21A of the Constitution, in agreement with the provisions of the RTE Act (Varma, 2014).

On January 3, 2019, the Rajya Sabha passed the Second Amendment Bill, 2017, on the RTE Act, 2019. In this bill, the withdrawal of the no-detention clause in Section 16 of the Act gives the option to hold regular

examinations in Classes 5 and 8 and detain the students if they fail to clear their examination. The state government may also hold on to the no-detention policy (Rai & Majumder, 2019), and maximum state government host this.

No Detention Policy

Right to Education Act 2009 includes a no-detention policy, where no child admitted to a school will be held back, expelled or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education.
In 2012, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) set up a sub-committee under Haryana Education Minister Geeta Bhukkal and concluded that NDP has had much harm on students learning. According to a National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) survey, 25 states and union territories oppose NDP because they feel that the policy is declining the quality of education in India. Only five states, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana and Sikkim, favor NDP (Sabharwal, 2018).

Importance of Examination Process

The US President Barack Obama's view states that 'Indian students do well across the world because they go through several examinations during their school years.' (Mishra, 2015). Now, other countries are following the examination process and India has withdrawn it. It is a common belief that examinations are essential to make students more competitive. Implementing NDP may be a good step for lower classes in the beginning stage. Still, it is not good after standard five because students must start preparing themselves for the board examination. If the students are used to going through the examinations from lower standards, it would help them to face the competitive examination. A lower-class student doesn't understand the importance of examinations, but when they grow up, they understand that higher-class students have to face a lot of pressure.

The motivation for the study

According to (Chowdhury, 2018), the implementation of a no-detention policy did not harm much on student's learning. The no-detention policy in India's schools may have done not as much harm to learning as it is accused of, according to a study by two research scholars (Saraf and Deshmukh) from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.
Their statement that implementing the no-detention policy has not significantly lowered the learning levels of students was shocking to us. Thus, we have decided to study the same data. Thus, to compare data before and after the Right to Education Act and its no-detention policy was implemented, we have also studied ASER reports from 2006 to 2022, except 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2021, as per availability and arranged the data according to class. When we investigated the data statistically, we found that implementing the no-detention policy has significantly lowered students' learning levels, which contradicts the (Chowdhury, 2018) study.

Literature Review

Snigdha, M. (2015) discussed India's flagship program, 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (SSA), for the Universalisation of Elementary Education, which has enhanced the enrolment rate and retention of children in school. India has shifted from retention to quality education to improve children's learning achievements. 'The No Detention Policy' was implemented to provide primary school children with an environment free from fear, anxiety, and stress, allowing them to study and grow at their own pace and check dropout rates. However, it has turned out to be counterproductive. It seems all is not well with the 'no detention' policy introduced under the RTE Act.
Mishra (2017) discussed that the contemporary international discourse on education is dominated by two perspectives, namely, the human rights approach and the post-development perspective. Mishra utilizes the ontological-epistemological toolkit provided by these perspectives to examine the debate on the rollback of the No-Detention Policy. The article begins by explicating the backdrop of the rollback debate in India. It then scrutinizes the arguments for and against a rollback under the respective lenses of the rights-based and post-development thought paradigms. The article intends not to suggest a definite resolution to the debate but to provide an informed theoretical grounding for the stakeholders to reason their case further.
Taneja (2018) said that "since the no-detention policy (NDP) implementation, the annual dropout rate has halved, and 13 out of 20 states have experienced an improvement in Board examinations, suggesting no negative consequences of no detention". The proposed amendment to the RTE Act risks penalizing students for the system's failure and is discriminatory, risking a disproportionate negative effect on the education of children from marginalized communities. It ignores the existing Supreme Court verdict on the issue, has the potential to damage the internal coherence of the RTE Act, and is retrogressive concerning India's international obligations on the Right to Education. Taneja recommends that state governments introduce detention to minimize the negative impact. The proposed amendment fails to address the root causes of poor learning and risks penalizing students from unfortunate and side-lined communities for the system's failure. The controversy misses the point that neither repeating a grade nor automatic promotion will improve students' academic skills – robust measures and investments to improve quality education and learning.

Sabharwal (2018) states that "the education sector in India has changed drastically. The government introduced the 'No Detention Policy' (NDP) under the Right to Education Act 2009, seriously affecting India's education system. The quality of education in India has been deteriorating since its inception. The policy was designed to reduce school dropout rates and create a stress-free student environment by removing the fear of being detained. However, students face tough challenges when they reach class IX because the safety net of no detention policy is till class VIII. The policy has lead to the development of a lackadaisical attitude of stakeholders towards the Indian education system". Sabharwal provides "the impact and consequences of the policy on Indian education. A lot needs to be done and modification in the policy is required to improve the education system in the country and save the future of our country"

Arora (2021) stated that India is expected to reach the stage of a true demographic explosion by 2050, and we must build strong foundations for New India. This is only possible through a quality, rich, vibrant education system. Arora focuses on the quality education in India after the incorporation of the No-Detention Policy (NDP) in 2009 by the Government of India. The question arises as to why the system (Pass-Fail) is being brought back when scraped to pave the way for NDP. The pass-fail system is being brought back when NDP seemed ineffective in enhancing quality education standards. There also arises the sense of education crisis with this flip-flop of policies as government and stakeholders should strive to derive an alternative solution that caters to all types of students, be they slow or fast learners, economically/socially backward, or strong students. The authors of this paper try to critically examine the impact of NDP by conducting a qualitative analysis through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with all stakeholders involved or impacted by it. They also attempt to give an innovative solution to this intensifying issue.
Arora raises subsequent questions: First, are the responsibilities of stakeholders, viz; parents, teachers, students, and policymakers, clearly defined? If not, what should be, and lastly, who is accountable for the deteriorating quality of education? Introspecting these questions will give researchers and policymakers almost all solutions to issues persistent in the education system.

Objective
To analyze the effect of the no-detention policy on students' learning by comparing performance before and after the implementation of the Right to Education and its no-detention policy.

Null Hypothesis
There is no effect of the no-detention policy on students' learning concerning their reading level and arithmetic levels before and after the implementation of the Right to Education and its no-detention policy.

Method

Data Collection
We have used the secondary data collected primarily by the Annual Survey of Educational Reports 'ASER' (a household survey based on children's enrolment and basic learning levels for each district and state in India), available on their website. To compare the data before and after the Right to Education Act and its no-detention policy was implemented, we studied ASER reports from 2006 to 2022 except 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2021, as per availability and arranged the data according to class.

Statistical Tools Used
To analyze the ASER data and compare the proportion of students according to their reading and arithmetic levels before and after the Right to Education and its no-detention policy, we will use the following methods:

→ Graphical Presentation
→ Shapiro Wilk's Test (Statistical test for testing of normality)
→ Testing of Hypothesis

Software Used
We used the software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to study the data.

Data Analysis
Null hypothesis to test is;
$\mathbf{H_0: \mu_1 = \mu 2}$

Against the alternative hypothesis,
$\mathbf{H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2}$

Where,
'μ_1' represents the mean proportion of students before the implementation of the no-detention policy,
'μ_2' represents the mean proportion of students after implementing the no-detention policy.

Reading Level

We have arranged the data on students' reading levels according to Class from 2006 to 2022 and tried to see the pattern of the proportion of students according to their reading capability before and after the Right to Education Act and its no-detention policy.

Graphical Presentation

If we draw the line graph of the proportion of students according to their reading capability before and after the no-detention policy, then the graphs will be as

Figure 1. Nothing Reading

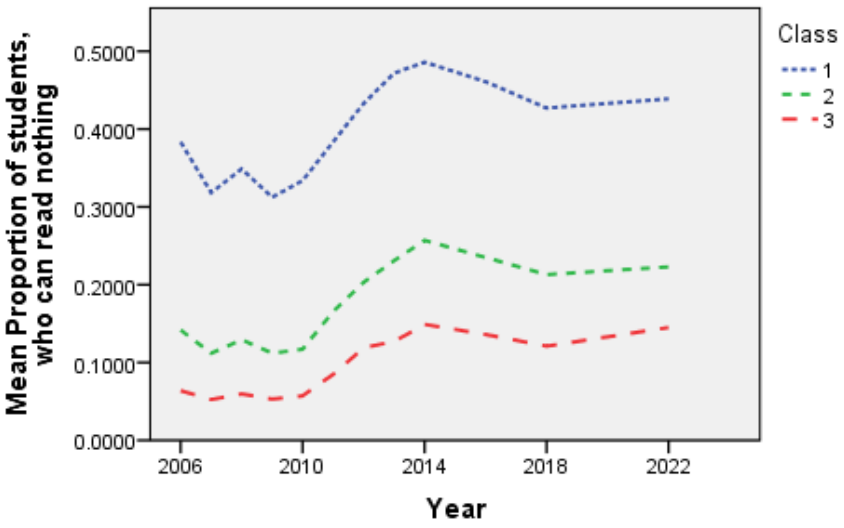
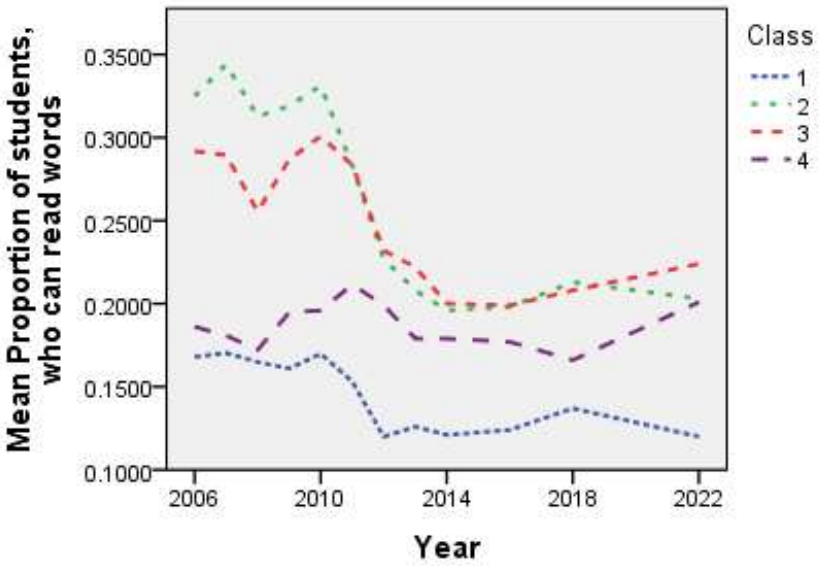
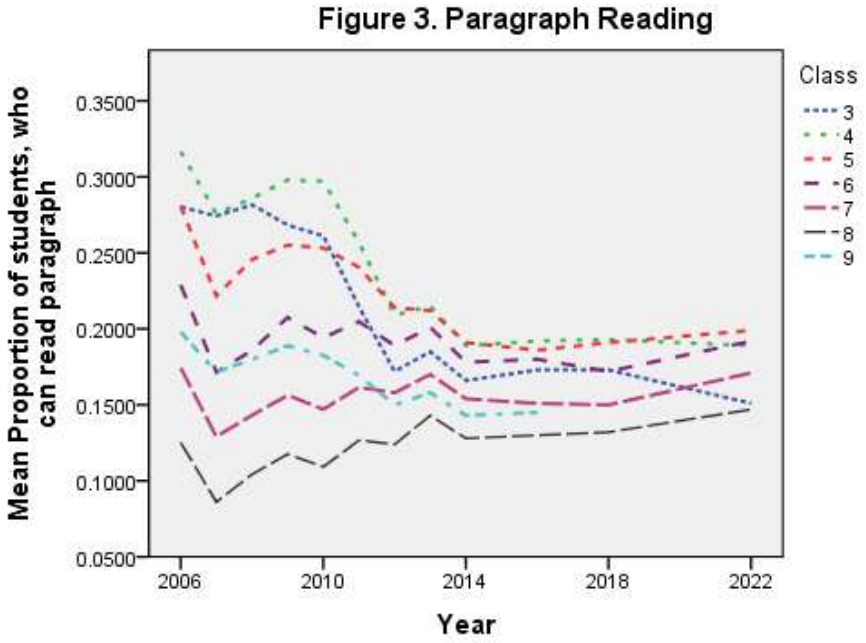


Figure 2. Word Reading





From the above line charts, we can easily see that the mean proportion of students who cannot read anything does not have too much variation before 2010 (before the implementation of NDP), while after 2010 (after the implementation of NDP), the proportion increases drastically.
Also, the mean proportion of students who can read words and a short paragraph did not have too much variation before 2010 (before the implementation of NDP), while after 2010 (after the implementation of NDP), the proportion decreased drastically. It implies that the no-detention policy has significantly lowered students' reading levels.

Results & Discussion

To check whether the mean proportion of students according to their reading level is significantly different before and after implementing the no-detention policy, we have grouped the data from 2006 to 2010 as 'before no detention policy' and the data from 2011 to 2022 as 'after no detention policy.'
First, we checked the normality of the data according to class, using Shapiro-Wilk's test. We have found that for nothing reading, word reading and paragraph reading, the p-values are greater than the significance level. So, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the data is normally distributed with respect to class. Therefore, we have applied the Independent Samples t-test and the results are as follows:

Table 1. t-test for Equality of mean proportion of students who can read nothing before and after the implementation of NDP

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
1	10	-.1037657	.0186477	-5.565	0.000	Differ Significantly
2	10	-.0958343	.0139534	-6.868	0.000	Differ Significantly
3	10	-.0687371	.0098982	-6.944	0.000	Differ Significantly

From Table 1, It is clear that for classes 1, 2, and 3, the value of t-statistics is significantly negative, which implies that the proportion of students who cannot read anything after NDP is greater than before NDP implementation. Also, the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05), i.e., we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant increase in the proportion of students who cannot read anything after the implementation of the no-detention policy.

Table 2. t-test for Equality of mean proportion of students who can read words before and after the implementation of NDP

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
1	10	.0380771	.0057675	6.602	.000	Differ Significantly

2	10	.1080714	.0145331	7.436	.000	Differ Significantly
3	10	.0608486	.0146388	4.157	.002	Differ Significantly
4	10	-.0015400	.0082817	-.186	.856	Not Differ Significantly

Since the students usually learn to read the words in classes 1, 2, and 3. So from Table 2, we can see that for classes- 1, 2 and 3, the t-statistic value is significantly positive, and the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05). This implies that the mean proportion of students who can read words after the implementation of NDP is significantly less than that before the implementation of NDP.
For Class-4, this difference is approximately neutral, as the students of Class-4 of batch 2011, 2012, 2013, and so on had already learned to read words before NDP, so the proportion of those who can read words will be approximately the same. Also, we can see that the corresponding p-value is greater than the level of significance (0.05), i.e., we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference in the proportion of students who can read words after the implementation of NDP for Class-4.
Also, the students of Classes- 5, 6, 7 and 8 have already learned to read the words in their junior classes (Class- 1, 2, 3), i.e., before NDP. So, we have not compared for these classes.

Table 3. t-test for Equality of mean proportion of students who can read Paragraphs before and after the implementation of NDP

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
3	10	.0967886	.0094789	10.211	.000	Differ Significantly
4	10	.0884086	.0124958	7.075	.000	Differ Significantly
5	10	.0464800	.0116779	3.980	.003	Differ Significantly
6	10	.0094657	.0097992	.966	.357	Not Differ Significantly
7	10	-.0093371	.0073234	-1.275	.231	Not Differ Significantly
8	10	-.0244571	.0067696	-3.613	.005	Differ Significantly

Since the students usually learn to read paragraphs in Classes- 3, 4 and 5. So from Table 3, when we consider Classes 3, 4 and 5, the t-statistic value is significantly positive, and the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05). This implies that the mean proportion of students who can read paragraphs after the implementation of NDP is significantly less than that before the implementation of NDP.
This difference is approximately neutral for classes 6 and 7, as students of classes 6 and 7 of the 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 batches had already learned to read the paragraph before NDP. So, when they reach Class 6 or 7, the proportion of those who can read paragraphs will be approximately the same. Also, we can see that the corresponding p-value is greater than the level of significance (0.05), i.e., we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference in the proportion of students who can read paragraph after the implementation of NDP, for Classes-6 and 7.
Also, all the students of Class 8 after NDP have already learned to read the paragraph in their junior classes (Class- 3, 4 and 5), i.e., before NDP. So, the corresponding t-statistic is significantly negative, and the p-value is less than the level of significance (0.05), i.e., we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant increase in the proportion of students who can read paragraph after the implementation of no-detention policy.

Arithmetic Level

We have arranged the data of the arithmetic level of students according to Class from 2006 to 2022 and tried to see the pattern of the proportion of students according to their arithmetic capability before and after the Right to Education Act and its no-detention policy.

Graphical Presentation

If we draw the line graph of the proportion of students according to their arithmetic capability before and after the no-detention policy, then the graphs will be as

Figure 4. Nothing arithmetic

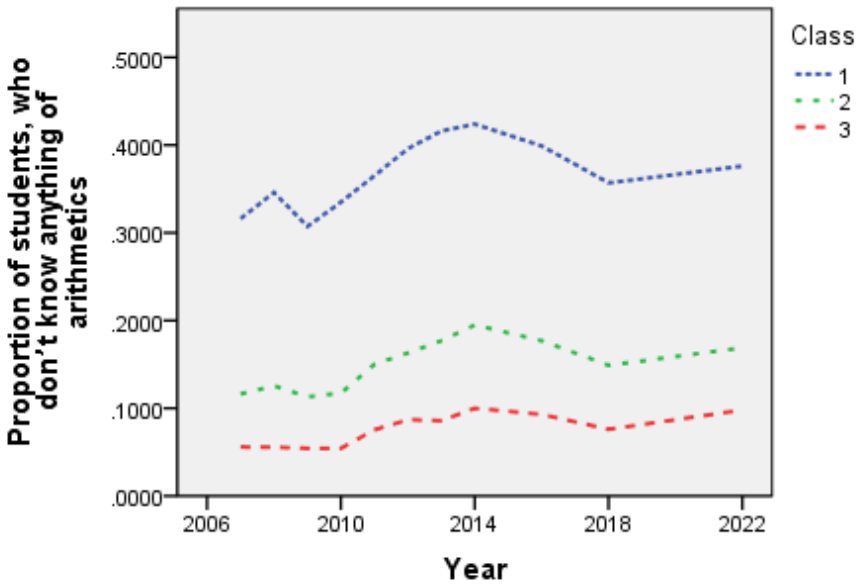
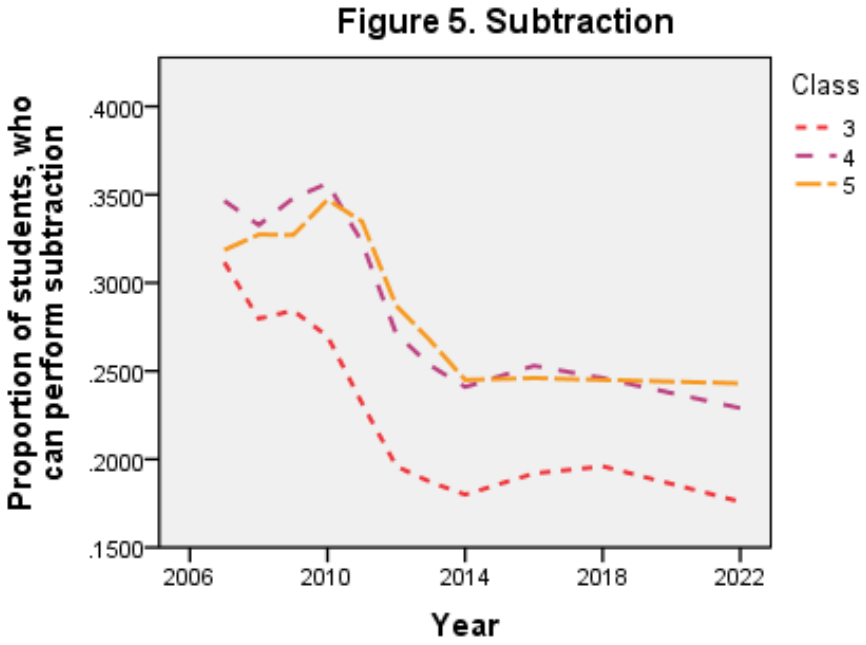
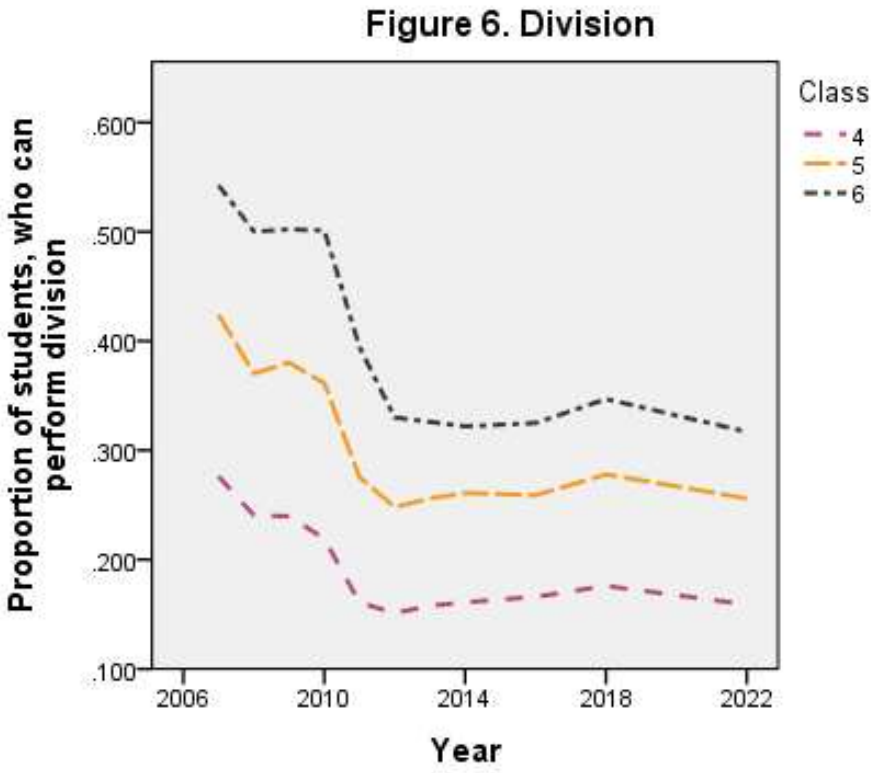


Figure 5. Subtraction





From the above line charts, we can easily see that the mean proportion of students who don't know anything about Arithmetics did not have too much variation before 2010 (before the implementation of NDP), while after 2010 (after the implementation of NDP), the proportion increases drastically.
Also, the mean proportion of students who can perform subtraction and division problems does not have too much variation before 2010 (before the implementation of NDP), while after 2010 (after NDP), the proportion decreased drastically.
It simply implies that the no-detention policy has significantly lowered the arithmetic level of students.

Results & Discussion

To check whether the mean proportion of students according to their arithmetic level is significantly different before and after implementing the no-detention policy, we have grouped the data from 2006 to 2010 as 'before no detention policy' and the data from 2011 to 2022 as 'after no detention policy.'
First, we checked the normality of the data according to class, using Shapiro-Wilk's test. We have found that for nothing in arithmetics, subtraction and division, the p-values are greater than the significance level. So, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the data is normally distributed with respect to class. Therefore, we have applied the Independent Samples t-test and the results are as follows:

Table 4. t-test for Equality of the mean proportion of students who don't know anything about Arithmetics before and after the implementation of NDP

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
1	9	-.0642929	.0144464	-4.450	.002	Differ Significantly
2	9	-.0505000	.0085561	-5.902	.000	Differ Significantly
3	9	-.0328893	.0050267	-6.543	.000	Differ Significantly

From Table 4, we can see that for Classes 1, 2 and 3, the value of t-statistics is significantly negative, which implies that the proportion of students who don't know anything about Arithmetics after the implementation of NDP is greater than that of before the implementation of NDP. Also, the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05). i.e., we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant increase in the proportion of students who don't know anything about Arithmetics after the implementation of the no-detention policy.

Table 5. t-test for Equality of the mean proportion of students who can perform subtraction before and after the implementation of NDP.

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
3	9	.0921964	.0114062	8.083	.000	Differ Significantly
4	9	.0864714	.0161740	5.346	.000	Differ Significantly
5	9	.0632464	.0180000	3.514	.007	Differ Significantly

Since the students usually learn to perform subtraction in Classes 3, 4 and 5. From Table 5, we can see that for Classes 3, 4 and 5, the t-statistic value is significantly positive, and the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05). This implies that the mean proportion of students who can perform subtraction after the implementation of NDP is significantly less than that of before the implementation of NDP.
Also, all the students of Class above 5 had already learned to perform subtraction in their junior classes (Class- 2, 3, 4 and 5), i.e., before NDP. So, we have not compared for these classes.

Table 5. t-test for Equality of the mean proportion of students who can perform division before and after the implementation of NDP.

Class	df	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
4	9	.082214	.009435	8.714	.000	Differ Significantly
5	9	.122096	.011489	10.627	.000	Differ Significantly
6	9	.174182	.015643	11.135	.000	Differ Significantly
7	9	.196536	.021149	9.293	.000	Differ Significantly
8	9	.222204	.025344	8.768	.000	Differ Significantly

Since the students usually learn to perform division in Classes- 4, 5 and 6, So from Table 6, when we consider Classes 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the value of the t-statistic is significantly positive, which implies that the proportion of students who can perform division after the implementation of NDP is lesser than that of before the implementation of NDP. Also, the corresponding p-values are less than the significance level (0.05). i.e., we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant decrease in the proportion of students who can perform division after the implementation of the no-detention policy.

Conclusion

After analyzing the statistical ASER data, we found that the learning level of students has decreased significantly since the implementation of the Right to Education and its no-detention policy.
Implementing the no-detention policy in India's schools, i.e., the automatic promotion of children between Class 1 and 8, has significantly lowered the learning level of students.
The study of research scholars of the Indian Institute of Management says that implementing NDP has not significantly lowered the learning level of students. Thus, our study opposes the IIM study and concludes that;
'Implementation of the NDP [no detention policy] has significantly lowered the learning levels of students'.

Recommendation

Thus, we recommend that the No Detention Policy should be abolished from India's education system.

Acknowledgment

The annual survey on educational reports (ASER) is the data we used for our study. Without this data, we could not have compared the effect of the no-detention policy on student learning before and after the implementation of the right to education.

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