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CCE, no-detention policy attacked, panel to review

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THE no-detention policy for school children right up to Class VIII under the Right to Education Act as well as the CBSE's Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system came under attack from state education ministers Wednesday at a meeting of the newly reconstituted Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).

Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Kapil Sibal announced that a CABE committee under the leadership of Haryana Education minister Geeta Bhukkal would assess implementation of the CCE in context of the no-detention provision in the RTE Act, hold talks with experts, and submit a report in three months.

However, Sibal emphasised: "The no-detention policy is probably not understood by schools as understood by us. Everyone agrees that not having board examinations is a good idea, but no examinations at all is not acceptable. Some people think no detention and CCE mean no exams — that is not the case."



HRD Minister Kapil Sibal with Planning Commission member Narendra Jadhav on Wednesday. RENUKA PURI

IIT EXAM: SIBAL REGRETS 'COMPLETE MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS'

CABE MEMBER and activist Shabnam Hashmi alleged that schools in Gujarat have been refusing admission to Muslim children since the 2002 riots. Gujarat Education Minister Raman Lal Bora was quick to dismiss her allegations. Sibal refused to comment, asking Hashmi to send him data on the issue.

SIBAL REGRETTED that there was "complete misrepresentation of facts" on the new JEE format of common entrance exam and that it was "not a government decision" but one taken unanimously by the IIT Council. Speaking on the sidelines of the CABE meeting, he said that at the core were two points raised by IIT Senates — ensuring that the test for admission to IITs was controlled by IITs alone and that school board weightage should not be part of the final assessment. "These were their core demands and we have agreed to them. The only area where there was variance was that the Senates wanted the new exam format to come into effect only in 2014 while the IIT Council said they were ready to hold it in 2013 itself."

Several ministers argued that not "failing" students as a matter of policy was affecting the quality of students and must be reviewed. Bihar Education Minister P K Shahi felt that the reading habit of students had suffered as a result,

while Chhattisgarh's Brij Mohan Agarwal contended that the impact was being seen in the "dwindling intellectual quality" of those clearing school. Shahi said this system should be abolished and more attention given to exams.

While educationist Vinod Raina clarified that no detention did not mean no examination, Secretary, School Education, Anhsu Vaish pointed out that detentions resulted in increased school dropouts.

Others, like Assam Education Minister Himanta Biswas, raised the issue of CCE implementation in the context of lack of teachers in rural areas. So there was little scope of implementing the CCE format—involving year-round assessment of student performance—Biswas said.

CABE, the apex educational body, also deliberated on the proposed National Mission on Teachers and finally resolved to set up a committee under HRD, MoS, D Purandeshwari to develop the mission framework. Sibal rued that even candidates with B.Ed and D.Ed qualifications were unable to clear the Teachers' Eligibility Test.

The Purandeshwari committee will especially look at ways to train teachers for inclusive education and for children with special needs. Disability activist Mithu Alur, who is a CABE member, had pointed out that its agenda had no mention of disabled children.