School Awards For Child Friendly Norms & Standards

A change in offing

Bratya Basu, the Minister-In-Charge, School Education of the Government of West Bengal felicitated 40 schools of the state with Sishumitra Vidyalaya Puraskar for outstanding contributions towards achieving the child friendly norms & standards. The award ceremony was organized in the historic Town Hall of the state capital on the auspicious occasion of the National Education Day 2012. Besides the highest level of school award, Sri Basu also felicitated 12 children of 9 districts with the State Prizes for their outstanding performance in Sit & Draw Competition on safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene organized on 9 April 2012.

The 700 dignitaries present in the Town Hall also remained the silent observer of unveiling of a School Calendar of 2013 strategically designed with the award winning paintings for the first time in the state. Children were at center stage. The announcement made by the Minister in Charge on up scaling the award scheme in Junior High School level and launching of the Jamini Roy Award for High Schools made it a reality.
The School Education Department has adopted the Water, Sanitation & Hygiene in School (WinS) interventions as a tool for RTE Compliance by making schools safe, clean, protective and equitable to all children with increased ownership of stakeholders as defined by the apex court. In a major move to achieve Child Friendly Norms & Standards, the department has launched an award scheme under the Sarva Siksha Abhijan (SSA) on the occasion of the first National Education Day on 11 November 2011. One school from each education circle (cluster of 100-140 schools) has been selected on the basis of evaluation criteria for Nirmal Vidyalaya Puraskar (NVP) that consists of cash prize of Rs. 5000/-, the Nirmal Vidyalaya Trophy and Certificate of Appreciation. Out of the NVP qualified schools, two best schools from each education district were awarded the Sishumitra Vidyalaya Puraskar (Child Friendly School Award) that consists of cash prize of Rs. 25000/-, the Sishumitra Vidyalaya Trophy and a Citation.

The objective is to encourage the teachers, children and parents to achieve the child friendly norms & standards through enhanced WinS facilities and practices. “The results are mixed but most encouraging that inspired us to take it forward to junior High and High School levels,” said Bratya Basu, the Minister, School and Higher Education, Government of West Bengal in his National Education Day address. “If Nirmal Vidyalay Abhijan triggers the process, the Nirmal-O-Sishumitra Vidyalaya Puraskar has ignited it,” Choten Dhendup Lama, the State Project Director of Paschim Banga Sarva Siksha Mission, Government of West Bengal added.

**NVP has triggered competition**

Decentralization is a prerequisite for child friendly system. Decentralized management of a well designed process was adopted that helped in intensifying competition amongst schools at scale. During the first year of constituting the award, 683 Primary Schools were qualified and received the Nirmal Vidyalaya Puraskar out of total 49870 applications. Government of West Bengal constituted the state and district level award committees to manage the process that helped institutional mechanism and a forum of WinS implementation and monitoring in all districts. **Highest level political and administrative priority**
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee herself (see photo above) felicitated 17 primary schools of integrated district Purulia with Nirmal Vidyalaya Puraskar 2012. In a public meeting at Hutmura of Purulia district on 3rd December 2012, the schools were awarded with cash prize of Rs. 5000/-, a citation and Nirmal Vidyalaya Trophy.

In a strategic move towards achieving child friendly norms & standards as desired by the RTE, the School Education Department, Government of West Bengal has instituted a new award i.e. Jamani Roy award at the state level, and was announced on 11th November 2012 by the Minister, School Education. State will award a cash prize of Rs. 50,000 to three best High schools meeting the CFSS and WASH standards from among the winners of Shishumitra Vidyalaya Puraskar. The scope of the Nirmal Vidyalaya and Shishu Mitra Vidyalaya award has been expanded to cover all Upper Primary and High Schools of the state.

“I am thankful to the District Award Committee of Purulia to provide me the rare opportunity to receive the award from the highest authority of the state in front of thousands of people of my district,” says Deepak Chakraborty, the Head Teacher of Dhabani Primary School. The school has also awarded with the Sishumitra Vidyalaya Puraskar on 11 November. “This must intensify the competition amongst the schools in next year and the children will get the dividend of it,” he added.

But what is the impact amongst others?

“Now I am receiving calls from other schools of our circle to guide them in achieving the status so that they get the award in next year,” added Deepak. Further my school looks visibly clean, children use WASH facilities regularly, wash their hands before Mid-Day Meal and after use of toilets and child cabinet actively participate in sustaining the improved school environment.