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Lower Attendance Rate: Using Formal Recognition of Students as a Strategy to Improve Attendance in School

Case Study Series 8: Prospects and Challenges in the Implementation of SDGs

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Case 5

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Understanding the Decline in School Attendance in Bangladesh

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for everyone. Schools play a crucial role in fulfilling this vision. However, in many schools, particularly in rural areas of Bangladesh, attendance has declined over the years, posing a challenge for Bangladesh in achieving this goal.

Several factors contribute to this trend. Economic hardship, poor infrastructure, long travel distances, and unsafe school routes can discourage school attendance, particularly for girls. Lack of engaging teaching methods, and inadequate facilities also influence students' motivation to attend school regularly. Additionally, the growing popularity of private coaching and tuition classes has led some students and parents to place less importance on regular school attendance. These factors have resulted in lower classroom participation and weakened the role of schools as central hubs for learning.

Motivating Students Through School Awards

Mr. X, a Deputy Commissioner of a district in Bangladesh, noticed that many students in his district were regularly absent from school. As he investigated the matter, he discovered that one of the primary reasons' students were skipping regular classes was to attend private coaching classes outside of school. To address the issue, Mr. X introduced a formal award program to recognise and celebrate students regular with school attendance and class participation.

Problem

Student attendance tends to be lower in some schools in Bangladesh due to socio-economic, infrastructural, and systemic factors.

Solution

A formal recognition of students who regularly attend school has worked as an incentive to encourage regular class participation.

Outcome

Improved school attendance along with better academic performance.

The award was not only based on students' attendance, but also considered their academic performance, personal hygiene, behaviour, and several aspects of their social and moral development. This initiative aimed to foster healthy competition among students and see the value of school learning beyond exams.

Over time, this award system improved student attendance rates and academic results. The initiative also motivated students to attend school regularly in the hope of having their efforts recognised. This recognition further helped re-establish the importance of school among students, teachers, and the community and restore the value of schools as the centre of students' overall growth. Schools in other districts can adopt similar models to encourage regular class attendance and promote academic excellence to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education.

About the Authors

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The case studies for this series are collected from real-life cases of civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different innovative solutions for effective governance and public services. If you know of other such instances of acts, please email us (noor.nadi@northsouth.edu), and we will get back to you to collect more information.