

Appoint School Social Workers in School: An Advocacy Campaign in India



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School Education in India

India is a home to a wider range of communities that are diverse in terms of level of development, ethnicity, socio-economic profile, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The child (0-6 years) population of India is 13% and adolescent (10-19 years) population is 19.6% according to Census 2011.

Approx. 20% population of the country is likely to be in schools, whereas the rest 13% are preparing to get into education system.

According to the National Education Policy (NEP,2019), the pedagogical structure for school education will comprise the following stages:

- ◆ **Foundational Stage:** 5 years :3 years of pre-primary school and Grades 1 and 2.
- ◆ **Preparatory(or Latter Primary) Stage:** 3 years of Grades 3, 4, 5.
- ◆ **Middle (or Upper Primary) Stage:** 3 years of Grades 6, 7, 8.
- ◆ **High (or Secondary) Stage:** 4 years of Grades 9, 10, 11, 12.

Thus, a school education covers children from the age-group of three to 18 years, and the school education stages correlate with the developmental stages of early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence.

The total number of schools across all states during from year 2014-15 are 1516865 which includes :

- ◆ 847118 Primary Schools
 - ◆ 425094 Upper Primary Schools
 - ◆ 135335 Secondary Schools and
 - ◆ 109318 Higher/Secondary Schools
- (Covered under District Information System for Education (DISE) in India)



School Social Work in Schools

- Not Known to many in India, Social work is an academic discipline and profession concerning with individuals, families, groups and communities.
- It works for better social functioning, to promote change, and for overall well-being.
- The concept of SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK is more than a century old, in 1906-07 in Hartford, Boston and New York.
- In India, many Social Work Educational Institutions (SWEI) started School Social Work in private and public schools in the decade of 60-70 in many cities like Mumbai , Delhi, Baroda, Nagpur, Varanasi, Lucknow and other places.
- There has been a dire need of a professional who looks into the lives of the students beyond their school premises/syllabus



Why School Social Worker (SSW)?

- Education in schools is not only about imparting knowledge, it is also about building character and empowering each child to be passionate, a lifelong learner and a global citizen of the future.
- **Students need care, guidance and support to cope in matters relating to their inter-personal and intra personal needs.**
- **Need to address the problems/crises faced by students 'in their academic, social, emotional and personal lives.**
- There are many problems such as Relationship, Stress, parent's expectations, pressure of perfection, examination blues and stress, anxiety, bullying, violent behaviour, relationship break down, drug abuse, **suicidal tendencies**, mobile addiction, cyber crimes etc.
- The trend of students misconducting to practicing heinous activities is on its high which is the result of life imbalance.
- **School social worker, expected to bridge the gaps between children, families, schools and communities.**

PRESSURE OF PERFECTION?

One student commits suicide every 55 minutes in India

In academic year 2017-18, more than 150 students across AP and Telangana committed suicide

In Hyderabad, more than 30 students committed suicide in academic year 2017-18

20% of city students in a single class are suffering from anxiety & depression

Suicide incidence rate per 1,00,000 population for those below the age of 14 is 0.5

Suicide incidence rate per 1,00,000 population for those in 14-17 age bracket is 9.52

WARNING SIGNS

- Isolation from family and friends
- Self-harm
- Drastic changes in mood and behaviour (extreme fear, sadness, irritability)
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits
- Drug and alcohol use
- Engaging in risky behaviours
- Showing less interest in activities they previously enjoyed

According to statistics, over the past three years more than 26,000 students have committed suicide across India. A majority of student suicides are caused by underlying psychiatric factors such as stress, depression and anxiety. It could result from difficulty in coping with academics, unrealistic expectations and pressure from parents and lack of support from peers. It is very important to identify the illness at an early stage and consult a mental health professional

—Dr Virinchi Shamma | A PSYCHIATRIST



National Education Policy and Its Mandate

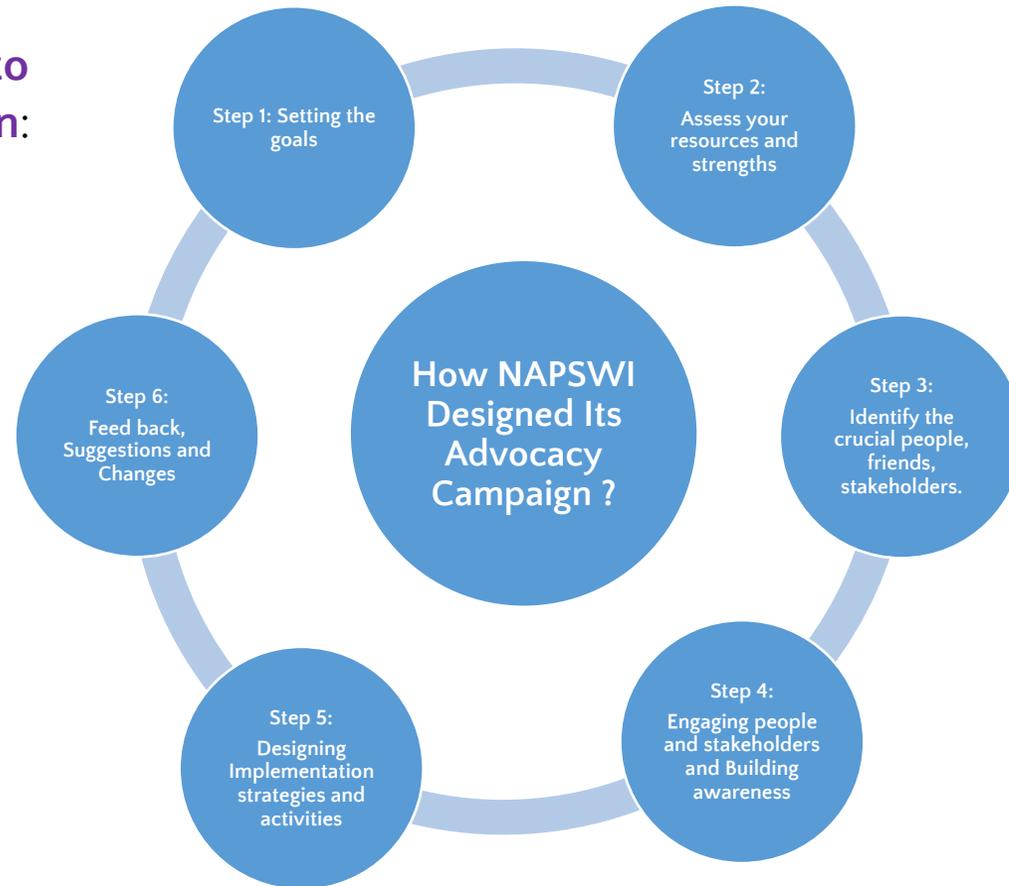
- The latest New Education Policy, chaired by Dr. K Kasturirangan, constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in June 2017, submitted its report on May 31, 2019 and now accepted as policy. The policy says
 - Schools can be grouped into school complexes to facilitate the sharing of resources and render school governance more local, effective, and efficient.
 - Hiring school social workers as it commits the introduction of counsellors and social workers into the schooling system
 - Adequate numbers of social workers will be appointed to the school complexes to advise parents and teachers on adolescent problems
 - Emphasis on the role of social workers -in encouraging children from urban poor families to go to school;
 - To explain children and parents in urban poor areas the value of school;
 - To connect parents and children with schools, teachers, remedial instructors, and tutors;
 - To plan with them methods (such as walking groups) and routes for children to reach school safely;
 - To inform parents of children's learning outcomes and help them to be involved in their children's learning (including arranging parent-teacher conferences as necessary);
 - To help children maintain connections with their parents' languages and culture;
 - To help keep children away from harmful activities;
 - To source of support and advice to children and their families throughout the learning process

This led us to initiate advocacy campaign on School Social Workers in Schools.



Steps in NAPSWI's Advocacy Campaign ?

We followed following steps to design our advocacy campaign:



- Established in 2005 National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NAPSWI) was to promote social work education and profession. It is the largest association of Professional Social Workers in India.

- NAPSWI aims to advance the knowledge and practice based social work interventions that enhance quality of life and standard of living of persons, their family and environment, to work for social development and empowerment of people and rights of each one.



STEP 1: Researching the Issue for Setting the Goals

- Our research shows that there is need of trained and qualified professional in school as teachers are not able to resolve their problems faced by students in changing circumstances.
- The important national policy documents on education support the move:



National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2015) Guidelines



National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005)



Rashtriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA, 2012)



And National education Policy

- - **Addressing at school level and need to address the problems/crises faced by students** 'in their academic, social, emotional and personal lives'.
- The interventions should be 'based on the expressed needs, concerns of the students as well as aligned to the needs and demands of the students' in their immediate socio- economic and political environment'.

STEP 1 : Advocacy Goals

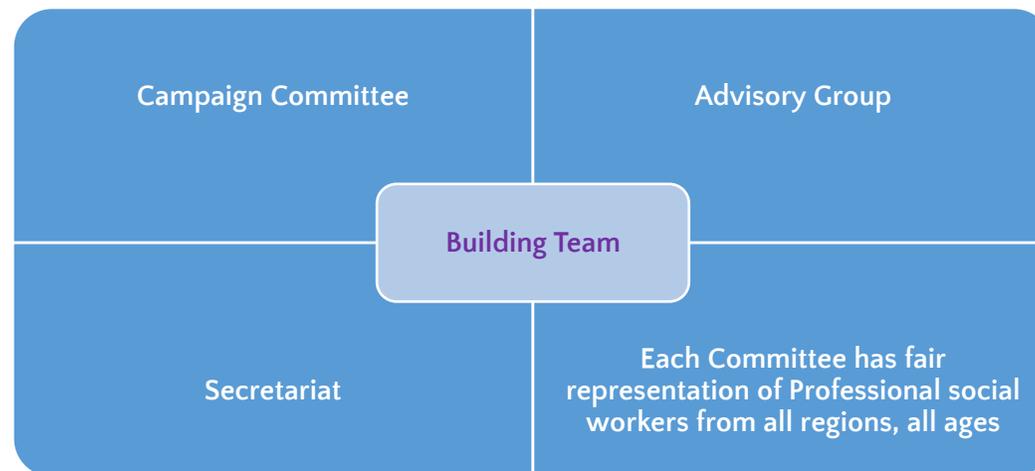
NAPSWI recognized the need and took the initiative to begin the campaign on School Social Workers in schools. The release of the NEP and other government commitment like **Right to Education** gave us impetus

- A set of objectives of the advocacy campaign were :



Step 2 : Assessing Resources and Building Team

- NAPSWI recognizes that we have capacity to influence and bring the desired change.
- **We have strong member based professional organisations.**
- School social workers is being taught at least **one fifth SWEIs** in India.
- **Schools are field work agencies in most of SWEIs.**
- In most of mega cities, there are number of school social workers engaged in private schools.
- **The literature on the subject in Indian context is available to demonstrate its applicability.**



STEP 3 and STEP 4

Step 3: Identify the Crucial People, Friends, Stakeholders

- We identified different Stakeholders
- School children, parents, Teachers, Principals, Management Committees, Officials of Education Departments, PSWs association, Teachers' association and other government bodies, SWEIs, Civil Society organisations, journalist and Media.
- We also identified Allies ; Opponents ; Influencers and Agents of change

Step 4: Engaging People and Stakeholders, and Building Awareness

- Identified stakeholders are being engaged in this campaign.
- We have started Awareness activities- Meetings with different stakeholders to discuss the issue,
- Signing online petitions;
- Writing legislators,
- posting on social media,
- Contacting Educational Ministers and secretaries,
- Initiating pilot projects;
- Approaching international organisations like Plan India, UNICEF and Global Social service Workforce And many more!

STEP 5 and STEP 6

Step 5: Designing Implementation Strategies and Activities

We designed the campaign with following strategies and activities :

- Awareness building
- Approaching Stakeholders (government, School Management , teachers , SWEIs to influence policy
- Researching Issues
- Contacting and Involving School Children
- Publicize the concept publish literature
- Bring Frequently Asked Questions
- Demonstrating Outcomes

Step 6. Feed back, Suggestions and Changes

- For any advocacy campaign, we need feedback , suggestions
- We set up mechanism to get feed back at single point contact naswicampaign@gmail.com
- Advisory Committee Reviewing our activities
- We have learnt a few lessons, changed our campaign title as well as approach after feed back.
- We have developed a new plan of action.

Lessons Learnt:

With six months advocacy efforts , we have learnt a few lessons:

1. Changing its title from “ Appoint School Social Workers in Schools “ to “ **Create School Social Work Center in School**” This change is more creative in comparison to earlier title which is being perceived by bureaucracy, government and a few others as coercive.
2. We now have one of its sub goal- *appointing School social workers in schools*
3. *We have rest our campaign and its goals and sub goals*
 - to promote the concept of Professionally qualified and trained Social Workers in schools
 - To reach out to all central and state ministries as well as other stakeholders for their support to appoint School Social workers in Schools
 - To improve the overall performance of schools by not only reaching out to students but also engaging teachers, parents and community environment around the children.
 - We have also developed sub goals and one of them was to appoint school social workers in schools.



