

BEST PRACTICES (2020 – 21)

I. TITLE OF THE PRACTICE: Creation of Online Academic Repository

The onset of the public health catastrophe in the form of the COVID - 19 Pandemic succeeded in bruising and subsequently altering all facets of human civilization in the last two years, the academic domain being no exception. The widespread assault of the disease has also tested the limits of perseverance and endurance of the human spirit but the latter has been able to withstand the havoc-wrecking virus by delving deep into its indomitable spirit and enterprising intellect which has transformed challenges galore into opportunities for advancement. The academic world has been at the forefront of the counter offensive using adequate technological mechanisms to ensure that the epistemological mission moved ahead unhindered. The fight has been a testimony to the strength of the collective and the college has tried to contribute to the best of its ability, not withstanding the endemic infrastructural and financial challenges.

Objective:

Being aware of the guidelines from the University Grants Commission and the State Government, the college shifted to adopting the online model of teaching-learning right from the time when the first wave of the pandemic hit the nation and subsequently the educational institutes were barred from holding classes in the traditional classroom environment. Online classes were held regularly as per the college time-table and even extra hours were added to the same keeping in mind the initial hiccups the participants would essentially face while shifting to a hitherto unfamiliar teaching-learning platform. In fact, two sessions each were organized with every semester to familiarize the students with the modalities of using the online platforms like zoom and google meet. It was realized right at the onset of the introduction of the new system that owing to the fluctuations in internet connectivity and the fact that majority of the students would find buying data packs regularly unaffordable, it was essential to create an easily accessible repository of lecture sessions. These recorded lectures were then made available to the students through a separate section in the college website. This was a step taken with the objective of ensuring equitable access to all the students many of whom reside in extremely remote areas and can ill afford regular and timely access to internet therefore making it difficult for them to attend all the online lectures as per the daily schedule operational in the college.

Context:

The primary goal of introducing the concept of academic repository was two – fold right from the very beginning. On one hand it was aimed at adding a substantial source of academic resource that the students could access and utilize beyond the usual class hours. The repository was also introduced to ensure ‘teaching presence’ at a time when ‘cognitive presence’ and ‘social presence’ were hard to maintain due to COVID induced lockdowns. In a traditional classroom learners’ needs are assessed, content is negotiated or prescribed and learning activities are orchestrated accordingly. Similar is the case in the case of teaching and learning in an online mode with the additional advantage of having a vast field of readily curated material at the disposal of a learner. Therefore, the academic repository introduced by the college aimed to bridge that gap as the resources were curated and made available by the subject experts with an in depth understanding of the unique academic demands of the students from this region and socio-economic background.

The Practice:

The first step towards building the repository was to record the regular lectures delivered by the teachers using the zoom and google meet platforms. Links to scholarly pages were also provided so that students could use their precious study hours fruitfully. Study materials were also made available in the college website.

Google forms were created and distributed regularly to assess learning outcomes after several sessions.

The teachers were asked to create separate Whatsapp groups to cater to the academic enquiries of the students. Apart from online classes, the various departments of the college also organized special lectures which were discipline-specific as well as on inter-disciplinary topics, by bringing in domain experts to interact with the students. These sessions were also recorded with the permission of the speakers and were made available to the students through the college website. The college ardently believes in education being the most suitable tool for holistic development of character and not just a means to economic opportunities and resultant prosperity. It believes that students must be made aware of their social responsibilities as empowerment entails instilling a sense of duty as well as an awareness of individual and social rights. With this goal in mind the college approached several relevant individuals and organizations and partnered with them to hold regular webinars on diverse subjects. These sessions were geared towards ensuring an interactive platform where students could voice their ideas. This the college felt was essential because many students belonging to backward socio-economic milieu suffer from a debilitating timidity when it comes to public speaking. Even these sessions were recorded and uploaded with the purpose of encouraging the students to view the content and shape their opinions regarding various issues operational in the society of which they too are an integral part. Programs held in association with local NGOs also informed them about employment opportunities in the vicinity which they could apply for.

Evidence of Success:

The academic repository started by the college received widespread praises from the various stakeholders of the institute. The alacrity with which students took to this model was a pleasant surprise as initially it was thought that not many students would be able to access it in the manner it was meant to be accessed. The continuous queries addressed to the teaching faculty regarding the minute details elaborated in the online audios and videos stand testimony to the manner in which the students embraced the endeavour like fishes to water. The number of views recorded in the dedicated Youtube channel started by the college for this singular purpose affirm the efficacy of the venture.

Problems encountered and resources required:

At the initial stage it was difficult for the teachers to adapt to the new method of imparting instruction. Students were also facing communication issues. They both were becoming quite conscious when it came to recording the online class lectures. However, in due course both the

students and the teachers could overcome their inhibitions. Wifi connectivity at home became mandatory for the teachers.

II. TITLE OF THE PRACTICE: Collaboration with Agencies to provide Awareness about Job Opportunities

Objective:

The College firmly believes that every student should be financially independent. They should be made aware of the various job opportunities and how to prepare for the same so that they do not have to depend on any body else. Instead they should be respected for the way they are and the job they do. Empowering girls to be able to realise their dreams and ambitions is one of the aims that the college wishes to fulfill through all its activities.

Context:

It is a common feature of this region that girls are not much aware of job prospects. Some of them reside in remote locations and for them accessing information becomes a major challenge. Besides, language barrier also acts as a major deterrent. Girls of this region are mostly in a disadvantageous position due to factors beyond their control. Therefore, it is important to provide them with opportunities and the relevant know how so that they are able to come out of their cocoons and face the world confidently.

The Practice:

The College makes it a point to arrange programmes on career awareness on a regular basis. During the entire period of lockdown, such programmes were organized in the online mode. Interactive sessions with entrepreneurs were organized so that students get an insight into how simple ideas can be converted into business ventures. Youth Employability Program was conducted in collaboration with TATA Consultancy Services. Students were prepared for job interviews. The College has signed Memorandum of Understanding with Anudip Foundation to provide training in Computer skills and Communicative English to the girls of the College. Besides, RICE Education of Cooch Behar organizes programmes on career opportunities in government sector at regular intervals.

Evidence of Success:

28 students completed their training in Livelihood Opportunities from Anudip Foundation. 24 students completed their internship programme under the Youth Employability Programme with TATA Consultancy Services. 1 student was offered the position of Trainee BPS by TCSL. 1 student has been engaged as Bansahayak under the Directorate of Forests, Government of West Bengal. 5 students have been selected for internship program in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector.

Problems encountered and resources required:

At times it becomes difficult to motivate and convince the students to come forward and take an active participation in these vocation related programmes. They need constant encouragement. At times even families are a little apprehensive about all these initiatives. It requires a lot of convincing on the part of the college authorities to persuade the students as well as their guardians.

