

Best Practices-2014-15

Best Practice-1

1. Title of the Practice

(This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.)

Entering in to MoUs with reputed institutions.

2. Goal

(Describe the aim of the practice followed by the institution. Brief the underlying principles or concepts in about 100 words.)

To enhance the employability of students by way of skill development and to equip students to succeed in the increasing competition.

The Chairman of the Management (*Vidya Prasarak Mandal*) repeatedly points out on various occasions that students have to upgrade themselves with valuable skills to face the increasing competition in the job and business market. In his vision students will find it difficult to survive the competition if they don't upgrade themselves adequately in time. In furtherance of this thinking systematic efforts are made by the College and Management to provide access to students to courses of internationally reputed institutions by conducting the same within the campus.

3. The Context

(Describe any particular contextual feature or challenging issues that have had to be addressed in designing and implementing the Practice in about 150 words.)

One of the important goals of the College is to make it easy for its graduating students to get job placement in a difficult market. The College is aware that many of its students are from vernacular medium and face some amount of difficulty in fluent communication in English. Good command over the English language with proper diction is a pre-requisite in the competitive job market. The Business English Course (BEC) is the appropriate training add-on which the students need.

Many sectors in the job market are found to be highly saturated. Certain sectors like tourism are newly emerging sectors with substantial support from the governments across the world. The job potential here is high but extra skills related to the field are required. The World Tourism Management Course is the ideal value addition for the students of this College.

Keeping the above contextual features in mind the College has gone ahead and started these two carefully selected value-added courses.

4. The Practice

(Describe the Practice and its implementation. Include anything about this practice that may be unique in the Indian higher education. Please also identify constraints or limitations, if any, in about 400 words.)

Indian Higher Education is in the process of active globalization in recent years. The competition in the job market has also been increasing. Students of our College require not only the knowledge and skills available in their regular course or programme of the University, but they also require additional relevant and extra skills to give them a cutting edge. Suitable MoUs with quality national and international institutions are the need of the hour to provide an array of added professional skills useful in the current job market.

The College/Management has selected for this purpose the Cambridge University, UK and Thomas Cook (India) and entered in to MoUs with them. Under these MoUs the College has started the following courses in its campus.

Business English Certificate Courses of Cambridge University was started. This course is aimed at developing the highest soft-skills including communication skills.

World Tourism Management Course of Thomas Cook (India) was started. This is focused on adding skills required to tap the job potential in the tourism market which is growing fast.

The implementation of this involves the following stages:

Signing of MoU

Fixing the fee structure

Fixing the Programme Calendar aligned to the academic calendar of the College and affiliating University

Orienting the students

Training of faculty by Cambridge University experts (BEC)

Inviting experts from Thomas Cook (India) as resource persons (World Tourism Management)

High standards expected by Cambridge University and Thomas Cook (India) in arrangements for examination process

Some of the constraints and limitations are as following:

Selection and availability of faculty within and outside the College in view of pre-existing time-tables/schedules. Lots of motivation is required for enrolling the students for such professional courses.

To make special arrangement of examination for visually-challenged students.

5. Evidence of Success

(Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks and review results.

What do these results indicate? Describe in about 200 words.)

The College started these two courses during the academic year 2014-15.

Business English Certificates (BEC) of Cambridge University, UK

The response for the very first batch of BEC was average. A total of twenty five students enrolled for the same. The entire course was duly completed. At the end twenty two students appeared for the First Level of examination called as Preliminary. Of this, twenty one students were successful.

The feedback from these students threw light on the value addition from this course. The students gained clear knowledge about various aspects of the English language required for accurate and elegant communication. They also experienced appropriate improvements in their own conversational style and content. All this added to their overall confidence and personality development.

Some of the students coming from Convent and English medium even reported that their previous understanding of the English language was not fully correct and many of their misconceptions were removed on going through this course. They found that there was vast improvement in their accent, diction, mannerisms and etiquettes. They are eagerly waiting to enroll for the next level i.e. Vantage.

World Tourism Management Certificate Course of Thomas Cook (India)

Seven students enrolled for the first batch of this course, completed it and some of them got appropriate placement. The feedback showed that the students realized that there was much more in tourism field than they had imagined. Further, they also became aware about the higher job potential in this emerging field.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

(Please identify the problems encountered and resources required to implement the practice in about 150 words.)

Problems

Time and space constraints due to large number of activities. This aspect is somewhat relieved by conducting tournaments during vacation. High cost of enrollment for some courses like tourism. Convincing students about the value of the course. Finalising schedules for training of trainers matching with the trainers' schedules.

Resources required include the following,

Provision of space for conducting the lectures

Provision of class rooms for conducting the examinations with seating arrangement complying with their rigorous standards.

7. Notes (Optional)

(Any other information that may be relevant and important to the reader for adopting/ implementing the Best Practice in their institution about 150 words.)

This is important as it contributes to increased career prospects for the student community.

This particular Best Practice is of a long-term nature to be gradually developed over a period of time. It may involve considerable efforts and resources but the motivating factor for adopting and implementing the same lies in the fact that it offers a powerful medium for extending socio-economic benefits and quality development of the students.

Identifying genuine, suitable and reputed institutions and appropriate courses is of crucial significance for the success of the practice.

All this contributes to enhance the employability of the students. Institutional Social Responsibility.

Best Practice-2

1. Title of the Practice

(This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.)

Establishing and operating a dedicated Braille Section in the College library

2. Goal

(Describe the aim of the practice followed by the institution. Brief the underlying principles or concepts in about 100 words.)

To provide easy access to required learning resources for the visually-challenged students within and outside the College.

It is a prime objective of the Vidya Prasarak Mandal to provide educational facilities to all sections of society and especially those coming from lower socio-economic strata. There is a section in the society which is differently-abled and one large part of this section is the visually-challenged people. This section is particularly disadvantaged in respect of learning and education. Availability of specialized learning resources in the form of Braille books, brailier (Braille type-writer), NVDA Free Open-source screen reader facility, etc. which they require is not sufficient to meet their needs. Hence, the College has seen an opportunity to fill this gap to the extent possible and thus serve society.

3. The Context

(Describe any particular contextual feature or challenging issues that have had to be addressed in designing and implementing the Practice in about 150 words.)

The number of visually-challenged students in and around Thane and the remaining districts of Maharashtra is quite large. As against this the availability of specific learning resources is not

sufficient. In contrast library books and other resources available for normal students is huge in quantity as well as in value. The visually-challenged students are unable to learn without the help of reader. Hence, providing for their needs is very valuable in helping them to complete their higher education.

In this context, both the central and state governments, and various social organizations have made it their policy to do the maximum for such people. The aim of this policy is to enable such students to complete their basic and higher education and to earn their own livelihood so that they can lead a respectable and self- dependant life in society. It is generally observed that many of such students while having a handicap in one area are unusually endowed in other faculties especially intellectual facilities. To make their high intellectual skills available to nation building, it is first necessary for them to complete their formal learning and education. Any step in this direction finally adds to nation building.

4. The Practice

(Describe the Practice and its implementation. Include anything about this practice that may be unique in the Indian higher education. Please also identify constraints or limitations, if any, in about 400 words.)

The increasing number of visually-challenged students studying in this College became noticeable. The College then realized the need to make special arrangements to cater to their needs beyond the regular library. This started a full chain of actions in this directions,

Feedback was taken from such students through specific meetings with the librarian

This feedback revealed that they wanted a special Braille section

This Braille section should include Braille books, brailler, earmarked space and furniture

Appropriate proposal was discussed by the librarian with the Principal and Management, who strongly supported the same

Accordingly, the librarian enquired about the availability of the baille books

In this process the College came in contact with Savitri Forum an NGO based in Pune

The Mission of this NGO is to assist and sponsor in the establishment of Braille sections in other institutions

The representatives of this NGO were invited to the College in this context and decision of creating Braille section in the library was taken

Savitri Forum graciously offered the Braille books worth Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) to the College

The College established a Braille section with Braille books worth Rs. 24772/- (Rupees twenty four thousand seven hundred seventy two) including Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) received from Savitri forum

The necessary infrastructure was created in Braille section in the College library which includes cup-boards, tables, chairs, brailier and other technical equipments

The Braille section was inaugurated on 4th February 2015 at the hands of Dr. Vijay Bedekar, Chairman, Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane

Mrs. Rashmi Pandhare, President, Savitri Forum, Pune and Shri. Swagat Thorat, Editor of the leading Marathi Braille Magazine, *Sparshadnyan* were present as Guest of Honour for the Inaugural Function

The Inaugural Function was also attended by many other people working for the cause of visually-challenged people

Thereafter, the Braille section has been regularly operational with good response. Page 43

5. Evidence of Success

(Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks and review results.

What do these results indicate? Describe in about 200 words.)

This practice which started as a small initiative has received tremendous response and appreciation within the College as well as outside.

Five to seven students from the College regularly use the Braille section.

Two to three students from outside also frequently visit this section. They come from distant places such as Panvel and Badlapur.

These students include students from Junior College, Under Graduate and Post-Graduate sections.

One of these students has completed the post-graduation in Philosophy with distinction. This student is presently placed as an officer in a leading bank.

These students are able to learn in a totally stress free environment and they freely interact with the Chairman, Principal, Vice Principals and Librarian of the College to communicate their needs.

Appreciation for this initiative has also come from other sections of society also. Some people have offered books to the Braille section. For instance, Shri. Uday Kulkani, resident of Thane donated 25 braille books to this section.

One of our own faculty members has volunteered to contribute to this initiative by arranging for recording of syllabus, text book contents and other related material useful for under graduate course in English literature. Further, the person has also offered to meet the expenses and cost of equipments required in this context.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

(Please identify the problems encountered and resources required to implement the practice in about 150 words.)

Problems

The main problem in this context is the lack of strong will to venture in to uncommon activity. Fortunately for the College there was no such problem at all on the contrary every person involved from the Chairman of Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Principal of the College, Librarian and right down to all the staff members and students were in favour of the idea and strongly appreciative of the same.

Space constraints within the library were overcome as a special priority.

Identifying suitable NGOs, identifying exact specifications of equipment required and identifying the suppliers of Braille books and other needy equipments are some of the problems encountered.

Resources required include the following,

Space in the library

Funds for purchase of books and equipments

Tables, chairs and cup-boards

Administrative staff

Class IV staff

7. Notes (Optional)

(Any other information that may be relevant and important to the reader for adopting/ implementing the Best Practice in their institution about 150 words.)

This is important as it contributes to bring visually-challenged students in to the main stream of the society with the respectable status.

This particular Best Practice is of a long-term in nature to be gradually developed over a period of time. It may involve considerable efforts and resources but the motivating factor for adopting and implementing the same lies in the fact that it offers a powerful medium for extending socio-economic benefits and quality development of the students.

This Best Practice results in helping in large number of visually-challenged students who otherwise lack access to such facilities.

This also provides a platform from which students with strong will but faced with a handicap can also develop themselves suitably and get employment on the strength of their higher education. This also gives them self-dependence and respectable status in society.

All this contributes to Institutional Social Responsibility.