

Best Practice I

Title of the Practice:

Outreach Programme: Converging Campus and Community

Objectives:

- Help students understand and reflect on social realities of our country
- Instill social conscience, responsibility and accountability towards the marginalized and oppressed
- Create space for students to put their creative bests and talents in developing poor and disadvantaged communities
- Promotion of ‘College-Community’ interaction and collaboration for mutual learning and contribute to building an inclusive society

Context:

“It’s not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of person-kind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely.” – Leo Buscaglia

The outreach programme of SJEC is aimed at fulfilling the Vision, Mission and Graduate attributes of the institution as part of the holistic development of our students. It aims at transformation of the students from mere observers to change makers once they pass out from our institution and face the competitive world. It is a combination of formal classroom education blended with field-based service-oriented learning. Our Outreach programme, enables students through experiential learning through a process of understanding, critical reflection, analysis followed by action.

By emphasizing on field-based education and internships, the college provides the students an opportunity understands the socio-economic, cultural and political realities of our society. This form of unique education fosters inter-disciplinary learning, enhances disciplinary skills. It gives the students a chance to communicate and collaborate with the community. They learn peer collaboration and learn communication skills during interactions with resource persons, experts and external stakeholders.

The learning pedagogy

The students are oriented in the classrooms on various topics of societal concerns during their first year of graduate and post graduate studies. During their second year of studies, they are expected to attend a rural exposure camp for a minimum of four days following that the post graduates have to prepare a report. The graduate students prepare a report during their final semester.

Inspired by Educators such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire who provided the philosophical underpinnings for educational reforms the college has adopted a rights-based approach in fulfilling the objectives of the Outreach Programme centring around the themes of Education, Human Rights, Environment, urban poor and Youth. The pedagogy of learning starts with understanding concerns of specific target group like the elderly, differently abled, women, children, sexual minorities, youth and migrants. Then the students are oriented to the level of intervention where they provide support services, provide education and help in livelihood programmes.

Collaboration

The College also collaborates with specialised agencies and NGOs like Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) in providing Covid assistance and Covid Vaccination, Women's Voice for slum development, Beautiful Bengaluru on Environmental issues, Bosco Mane for street children, Ondede for collaboration with transgenders, Nightingale for Specially abled children, Centre for Non-formal and Continuous Education for collaborating with Education awareness programmes, Sisters of Charity for Rural Exposure Programmes.

Moving with communities helps students to understand the multicultural social fabric of our country and help them understand the secular values which our freedom fighters had cherished and incorporated into our constitution. It helps them to strengthen their resolve to uphold democracy and question the stereotypes with regard to the social beliefs and the ill treatment of women in particular.

Evaluations are conducted for course corrections and helps students to understand their mistakes as well as areas where they have really done well. Learning is the main goal of every student at SJEC and the process is facilitated through Outreach Programme which is part of the Extension programme of our institution. There is no substitute for learning, at SJEC learning is facilitated through personal field-based experiences and it comes through understanding, reflection, analysis and action.

Practice:

The institution adhering to the guidelines of UGC has set up a structure in the form of an outreach center that enables it to share the resources like knowledge, manpower and infrastructure in the development of the community. It is mandatory for every student who enrolls into St. Joseph's Evening College to extend his/her service to the community. The service provided by the students is acknowledged by the institution and credits are provided for the same. The classroom and community interaction is structured in a scientific manner in order to enrich the experience of both students and community members. In the first semester students receive an orientation into understanding the social setup of the community they will be collaborating with closely through talks and lectures. In the second and third semester students will engage in field visit in order to practically apply their theoretical knowledge and this field visit is of 30 hours. In their fourth semester the students spend four days in a village exposing themselves to the reality that is different

and enriching themselves by the rich cultural exchange with the community. Finally the students are made to document their experience and learning and present the same to the mentors.

In order to enhance the quality of experience for the students the outreach center collaborates with various NGOs and communities. Students as part of their field visit and awareness campaign involve in following activities. They promote Traffic awareness in and around the institution and participate in cleanliness drive by cleaning their surroundings. They participate in 'Save Water Campaign' and 'Lake Awareness Programme' in order to sensitize the community about the scarcity of water. They also most importantly visit charitable institutions in the city of Bengaluru and render their service. Some of the charitable institutions that the students are accompanied are as follows, Shishu Bhavan, Home of Hope, Home for the aged, Kidwai Cancer Hospital and Snehadan HIV/AIDS Center among others. Our students also take tuition classes for students of government schools with whom the institution has tied up and to the children in slums.

Evidence of Success

A change in attitude among students is evidenced by the fact that there is willing participation in campus initiatives such as The Sneha Fund, where students from humble backgrounds contribute generously to help other students in need. More evidence can be found in the rise of a spirit of voluntarism in the student body for social activities. Some communities get perennial support enabling a direct linkage with the community and the college

Problems encountered and resources required

The classroom-community exchange has immensely benefited students which is obvious in their outlook and attitude towards the disadvantaged sections of the society. But the practice is not without problems and setbacks of its own. One of the major problems is to convince the parents of the students, whose idea of the education is confined to the four walls of classroom, about the importance of such practice. Some of the other problems faced by the institution are as follows and the institution needs resources to address these problems.

- Pooling in resources: the exercise comes associated with a significant financial burden currently borne by the institution.
- Logistical issues such as managing large number of students, discipline, accommodation, travel, security, food, etc.
- Collaboration with the NGOs and other agencies to orient our students towards an understanding of the larger social issues that may be invisible in the community they interact with.
- Apprehension of certain parents

Resources required

- Administrative support in order to meet the growing number of students
- Infrastructure
- Trained Social workers to guide and orient students
- Funds or grants for special programmes, events and activities

It is in this context the institution has adapted Cura Personalis- caring for the whole person as its best practice and has evolved a system that promotes holistic development through mentoring and counseling apart from nurturing their spiritual values through daily prayer and instilling in them a passion for academic excellence through rigorous training.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Practice:

Cura Personalis- caring for the whole person is inculcated into the very fabric of curricular design and development. Specific to the promotion of intellectual and cognitive development, the college ensures that students are provided opportunities to learn and grow beyond the curriculum. Every department organises a number of national and regional conferences, workshops, symposiums and seminars. Students are also encouraged to publish and present academic papers under the supervision of the faculty. These opportunities allow students to develop a spirit of scientific inquiry, and to learn, analyse and discuss contemporary challenges, trends and developments within and outside their field with subject experts.

In relation to spiritual development, the college fosters an environment of secular spiritual growth and inter-religious harmony. This is highlighted by the activities of the Harmony club, a club specifically focused on fostering inter-religious harmony and secularism. Students are also encouraged to start the day by inculcating a spirit of mindfulness through the daily prayer that is organised on various themes including gratitude, peace, joy, love and hope. These short prayers help cultivate a spirit of mindfulness, self-awareness and spiritual growth.

The emotional and psychosocial wellbeing and growth of the students are developed and maintained through the mentoring system and counselling services offered by the college. The mentoring system aims to provide one-on-one care for every student during their academic journey. Every student is paired with a faculty who becomes their mentor during their enrolment at the college who further accompany them till they graduate. Students who are especially vulnerable to mental health issues are referred to the Department of Counseling for further psychotherapeutic aid and are accompanied empathetically during the whole process.

As one of the best practices, Cura Personalis encompasses every aspect of the student's development while simultaneously promoting character formation, social concern and academic excellence in them.

Evidence of Success

Cura Personalis- caring for the whole person as practice has immense effect on the lives of students who enroll themselves into SJEC. They go through transformation in the course of their journey, as a result of close accompaniment, which is visible in their improvement in academics and interpersonal skills. They discover their skills and showcase them during the inter-collegiate and intra-collegiate events. The students through cura personalis have been helped to find a right balance between work and study as most of them work during the day to sustain themselves and their families. The success of holistic development is witnessed when students reach out to the marginalized sections of society willingly and offer their service passionately during the outreach programmes.

Apart from that students who graduated from SJEC have performed well in their respective fields. They are equipped with various intelligences that make them successful in different arena of their lives. Having this practice set up at SJEC has been fruitful to students in their personal and professional lives as they are able to tolerate ambiguity, be mindful and more aware of themselves and their environment. The students graduating from SJEC have found a strong holding in their respective institutions and organizations and have been actively involved in nurturing the growth of the underprivileged by being socially informed and proactive.

Problems - Resources required

Implementation of Cura personalis- caring for the whole person has certain limitations. It has been the experience of some of the faculty that academic requirement does not allow them to tend to the needs of students at a micro level. The other major problem faced by the institution in implementing Cura Personalis is when faculty discontinue their service in the middle of academic year for many reasons. The change of mentor will take time in re-building the rapport with the mentees.

The institution requires the following resources to implement this practice more effectively

- Administrative support in order to meet the growing need of students
- IT support- in a pandemic driven context
- Infrastructure
- Professional Counselors

- Funds or grants for special programmes, events and activities