

Best Practices

1. Implementation of Examination Reforms

Objectives of the Practice

- I. To execute the pragmatic and holistic education as specified in the National Education Policy 2020.
- II. To discourage the examination centric education designed for learners.
- III. To promote and develop knowledge and understanding based education which is application oriented.

The Context

PanditSundarlal Sharma (Open) UniversityChhattisgarh adheres to the standard benchmark practices in the conduct of examination and declaration of results. Under the traditional pattern of examination, questions were based on prototype of asking solving five long questions out of a given number of choices for a particular course. This pattern was indeed based on assumptions of guessing of questions for examination by the learners and formulated predictive style to approach an examination. The pattern called for adopting wrote memory based technique for appearing examination, where the learners were not bound to study for round the year. Moreover this approach focused on obtaining higher scores, as obtained score became the determinant of knowledge for the learners community. Teachers therefore emphasized more on pushing the students to obtain higher score in the examination. Learners and parents were also driven by this sole motto and thus resulted in the development of tuition culture. Thus the formulated environment created an atmosphere to follow wrote memory system where learners were subjected to tremendous amount of stress which also resulted in suicide (in some instances). The directives issued by National Education Policy 2020 called for providing stress free learning environment to the learners which can facilitate the overall growth and development of the learners. It emphasizes on acquiring skill based knowledge which is catered upon learners understanding and wisdom.

The Practice

Working in the above context the university felt the need to change the traditional pattern of examination which has numerous shortcomings. One day state level seminar was conducted to have brainstorming on "traditional pattern of examination" and how to develop "new examination pattern" which would be conducive to the learners. A series of steps were identified in this regards.

STEP I Question Paper Setting: Framing of the question papers were done specifically to discourage the wrote memory approach followed by the learners and to ensure that learners are compelled to read the entire syllabus without having predictions for a particular type of questions asked in the examination. The exam pattern covers about 100% of the curriculum. There are 24 questions in a question paper in the examination. The question pattern was thus designed in five different sections i.e. from A to E. Section A comprises of one word/objective answer type questions, section B constitutes one to two line answer based questions, section C covers one paragraph based answer to questions and section D and E covers long type and very long type answer based questions. The question paper of a specific course is set in the same way for both the examinations i.e. assignments and term end examination. Thus the entire framework of question papers is adequate to test the learning of learners.

STEP II Ensuring coverage to designed curriculum: The pattern of questions for a particular course aims to cover the entire syllabus which is homogeneously divided into various sections. Teachers who are engaged in question setting are provided with prior instructions to design question in accordance to this specific pattern which would cover the entire curriculum of a particular course. Thus in order to appear for examination, learners have to undergo study for the entire syllabus or curriculum. Moreover varied pattern of questions in the examination inculcates them to follow a feed-foreword or feed-backward approach to prolong or shorten a type of answer provided in the examination.

STEP III Evaluation Pattern: Pattern of evaluation is a continuous process and are based on transfer of learners understanding and application to a particular examination. Evaluation of answer scripts of learners is reflected in the content of writing and the way learners approach to answer questions in the examination. Learners thus adopting wrote memory approach obtain less score in comparison to that of those whose approach of answering are based on knowledge and understanding.

Evidence of Success

The current pattern of examination is successfully implemented to all the programmes offered by the university. The evidence of success lies in the fact that the pattern followed has gained favorable and satisfied feedback from the learners community. Teachers fraternity has also regarded this framework as most appropriate tool for evaluation of knowledge and skills acquired by the learners.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- 1) The reform made in context of adoption of new pattern of examination called for high will power for its execution, especially in the open and distance learning format of education.
- 2) The challenge was to change the traditional pattern of mindset developed among the teachers which persisted for a long period of time. Initially there were challenges to refrain the behavior of teachers regarding the structure of examination.
- 3) Paper setters were too encountered with problems at initial level to design questions with in-depth approach. Instructional training was imparted to them in this regards.

2. Sustainable Practices for Green Campus

Objectives of the Practice

PanditSundarlal Sharma (Open) University Chhattisgarh is an eco-friendly institution. The university campus is surrounded by greenery including plants, trees, farms, ponds, garden, and open grass grounds. There is an eco-friendly atmosphere for the learners in the campus. Various sustainable practices are carried out by the university to keep the campus green. The university has installed solar panels, solar water heater, and sensor based energy conservation equipment's in the campus. The objective is to promote sustainable and eco-friendly practices in the campus, and to motivate and set practical examples for the learners to be eco-friendly and to keep the environment green.

The Context

Due to the numerous environmental difficulties we are facing today, it is imperative that we practice conservation in the areas of energy, water, and afforestation. Humans are depleting natural resources far more quickly than they can be regenerated, which is the primary cause of these issues. Due to deforestation and urbanization, pollution is getting progressively worse. Since the institution is situated in a region of the state with little rainfall, it seldom gets any. To utilize the water and other resources that were readily available, it was vital to plan ahead. An atmosphere that is clean and healthy promotes learning and is conducive to learning. A Green Campus combines eco-friendly activities and education to enhance sustainability on campus. The green campus concept allows an institution to rethink its environmental culture and build new paradigms by creating sustainable solutions to environmental, social, and economic concerns. We choose to inform and enlighten learners on topics like renewable energy sources. We made the decision to focus on the clean-up, water, power, and infrastructure sectors. The stakeholders collaborate to create a sustainable, eco-friendly campus and to spread the idea of an eco-friendly culture.

The Practice

In order to promote a campus culture of self-sustainability and environmental responsibility, the university resolved to collaborate with stakeholders. Following are the initiatives for making the campus eco-friendly:

- a) **Plantation:** Most area of the university campus is surrounded by plants and trees. The ground in the campus is covered with grass. Every year plantation is done in the campus by the learners, employees, teaching staffs and officers. Especially on the occasion of world environment day plantation is organized in big scale. The Learners of the university learn that everyone is responsible for keeping the environment clean and green.
- b) **Energy Conservation:** In the context of conservation of energy following initiatives are employed in the campus:
1. **Solar Panel Power Project:** To keep the campus green, the university has set up solar panels power project of 50 KW and 5 KW in 2018-19, and recently installed 200 KW solar panel. This fulfills the institution's energy requirements. The present solar installation will give the output of 255 KW. With this, university reduces the cost of government electric supply. University has enough roof top space to generate much capacity of solar power which can be utilized in future.
 2. **Solar Water Heater:** Solar water heater is installed at the VC bungalow in the campus.
 3. LEDs and CFL bulbs are placed in the various buildings of the university in order to save electricity.
 4. **Rain Water Harvesting:** Rain water harvesting system is in place to collect roof runoff in some buildings of the campus.
 5. **Pond:** 2 ponds have been built in the university campus to store rain water.
 6. **Sensor Based Energy Conservation Mechanism:** It is placed in the street light to save the electricity.
 7. **Water Controller Mechanism:** It is placed with the tanks at the roof top of the buildings to stop water overflow and save water.
- c) **Waste Management System:**
1. **Liquid Waste Management:** University is structured in such a way that proper handling and treatment of all liquid waste are taken care of. All these liquid wastes are stored and disposed of in the campus through underground sewage.
 2. **Solid Waste management:** Solid waste management system is in place in the campus. All the solid waste are collected and dumped into waste dumping area.

3. **Electronic Waste (E-waste):** E-waste are collected and placed in the E-waste room in the campus.
4. **Plastic waste management:** The university is practicing various activities to make the campus plastic free.

Evidence of Success

The university has planted thousands of plants over the years in the campus. Also, the university has set up a solar panel power project of 50 KW and 5 KW in 2018-19, and recently installed 200 KW solar panel to cater its electricity requirements. Apart from the mechanism of energy generation, there are mechanisms of energy conservation at the university through sensor-based street lights, water level controller and LED bulbs etc. The university has farms and ponds in the campus. Plants, trees and farms are irrigated with the proper water supply through boreholes and ponds. Ponds are also helpful in order to maintain ground water level. Green audit and energy audit have been conducted by the university in recent years.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The development and maintenance of a proper infrastructure for green practices is the most significant obstacle to the Green campus programme. For the successful implementation of Green campus practices, specific funding should be allocated. Also, it requires a succession of awareness activities to educate and teach more individuals.

3. Multiple Learner Welfare Programs

Objectives of the Practice

- I. Learners Support Services (LSS) is intended to promote services to the learners enrolled in various programmes in the University.
- II. The principle involved behind this offering is promote high level of anticipation among the learners for higher order awareness and satisfaction.

The Context

The demography of Chhattisgarh state comprises of predominant rural belt which comprises of almost half of the population belonging to the tribal belt. These population are generally cut off from the main stream of society and thus feel shy to mingle with the urban life. Penetration of education in this context is therefore a difficult task. The challenge lies in bringing these population to the main stream of education. Adaption of formal college education is also a tough task under the prevailing circumstances. To widen the scope of open education it becomes challenging to disseminate information, keep them active for learning to fulfill the learning objectives. In order to promote greater response and facilitate learning among the learners it is imperative to address their requirements at their own level. University in this regards designs numerous practices which facilitates their need in order to promote learners expediency and ease of learning.

The Practice: The University has initiated numerous initiatives for its learners in place:

- 1) **University Website:** Website of the University disseminates updated information to all the learners which can be accessed on any time basis.
- 2) **Online Admission System:** Online admission system is implemented to automate the admission process. There are two academic sessions every year in which the university admits new learners: one from July to June and other from January to December. Online admission system is applicant-friendly, efficient, time-saving, accurate, and cost effective with increased speed and broader accessibility.
- 3) **Mobile App:** In order to facilitate the learners for wider information access the University has its own mobile application.

- 4) **E-SLM:** Study resources in the form of e-self learning materials (E-SLMs) are available in the website which are free to access and use by the learners.
- 5) **Hostel Facility:** There are separate Hostel Facility for both boys and girls in the University headquarter which are provided to the learners at a minimum price during their scheduled contact classes and transit visit to the university. These hostels are also used for youth transit hostel purpose. This is an uncommon facility in the distance mode institution.
- 6) **Day Care Center:** Day care center located in the University campus facilitates those learners who are either pregnant or come with their child. The idea is to facilitate learners of this category for minimum possible casualty.
- 7) **Returns of Programme fee to BPL Learners:** In order to identify and acknowledge bright learners, the University Returns the Programme Fee to the learners who stand first class first in various programmes at the University level.
- 8) **CCTV Cameras:** In order to ensure safety and security to the learners at the workplace, CCTV cameras are operational in all the buildings of the University.
- 9) **Psychological Counselling Center:** In order to promote psychological well being among its learners, Psychological Counselling Center is set up at the premises of the University. This center provides free of cost psychological counselling to its employees and learners.
- 10) **Yoga Arogya Kendra:** In order to promote physical wellbeing among the learners, Brahmashri Yoga Arogya Kendra is setup at the University premises. This center is operative from 7-9 am to provide free Yoga classes to the learners.
- 11) **Online Payments:** The University accepts online payments or payment through the bank challan for its different areas of operation to facilitate learners group. This includes online payment for admission, examination, certification etc. This ensures that the mechanism in practice is fair and transparent for the learners' community.
- 12) **Model Laboratory Facility:** Model Laboratory facility is available at the university headquarters for better training of the learners.

Evidence of Success

It is evident that with the implementation of online admission system in the university, enrollment has significantly increased. The feedback collected from the learners exhibited with level of satisfaction towards online learning.

The learners at present avail various facilities offered by the University which previously didn't exist. This includes provision for hostel, updated and accessible website, e-learning materials, safety and security, free psychological and physical counselling services, online payment facility, telephonic counselling etc. This is ensured by the positive feedback of the learners. All these learner support services in place are aimed to facilitate a learner-centric environment in place where they feel free to learn and grow. It is evident that these practices are well placed, since the admission statistics of the University is showing an increasing trend over the last few years.

Problems encountered and Resources Required

Most of the offered services by the University are technology dependent and therefore at times are subjected to technical disorders. Moreover learners from various rural areas face critical challenges to avail these online services provided by the University. There are at times communication gaps between the learners and the University or the learner support centers which makes them deprived of availing the services. Online admission process is a cumbersome task in the rural and Naxal affected areas of Chhattisgarh state. Naxal affected areas do not have proper internet connectivity and postal communication and thus the online process of admission is hugely affected.

4. SLM in Local Language and its Distribution System

Objectives of the Practice

- IV. To align the objective of NEP 2020 for Higher Educational Institution by offering the study content in Local and Regional Language.
- V. To ensure efficient delivery of Self Learning Materials (SLM) to the Learners.

The Context

- 1) The Self Learning Materials (SLM) act as an invaluable resources for learners in Open and Distance Learning system. Development of quality SLMs in regional language is an important aspect in order to facilitate and encourage local learners for the academic enrollment and growth. Development of SLM is a delicate task which comprises of series of steps for its completion. Generally teachers of higher educational institutions are developing the teaching materials or the content in English language. Majority of learners community in the state of Chhattisgarh are fond of speaking and reading Hindi language, and thus the available English content are tough to learn on their part. Moreover learning material contents of various courses are also unavailable to cater this requirement. Many of the open universities in India has also substantial restriction to make their learning resources to the institutions. In this regards, the challenge was to design and offer SLM to the learners on the basis of their adaptability and understanding.
- 2) Since the learners are segregated across the length and breadth of the state, it was a challenge to streamline the distribution process of SLM to ensure that it timely reaches in the hand of end users. Before hand the implemented practice was unable to deliver the same to the learners and even at times it was found that SLM didn't not reach the learners till the point of their examination. It was thus imperative to evolve with a fresh approach of SLM distribution which would reduce the waiting time and ensure faster delivery of SLM.

The Practice

- 1) The university follows an indigenous approach to develop the course content in local (Hindi) language through a series of steps. Firstly in order to develop the content, faculties from the required stream who can act as expert in that field for development of SLM in regional language were identified. In this regards both in house and outside experts were hired and

assigned with the task of content development which is in accordance with the curriculum prescribed by the relevant Board of Studies (BOS). The development of SLM by the faculties is coordinated by the SLM department of the University. Once the content development process is completed, it is subjected to evaluation in the form of quality checks of the contents which is done by the relevant BOS of the university, after the approval of BOS the same is placed before the Academic Council of the university for final evaluation and approval.

- 2) In order to facilitate efficient distribution of self learning materials to the end learners, the university has signed agreement with postal railways to avail postage service. Once the admission of learner is confirmed through the admission section, an address ticket containing the postal address of the learners is generated. MPDD section has a unique mechanism of packaging and dispatching the learning materials through railway mail services which is done on daily basis. This ensures that the study materials reach the target learners within 10-15 days of their admission. Tracking mechanism facilitates to have a continuous follow-up to the delivery mechanism in place. In about 99% of cases timely delivery of study materials is ensured, while the remaining 1% of unsuccessful cases are due to the wrong address provided by the learners. For these type of instances study materials are distributed through study centers and university headquarters.
- 3) University has adopted Open Educational Resource (OER) Policy to provide all its learning materials displayed at the institutional website. This ensures uninterrupted learning services without the help of physical component to all its learners in place.

Evidence of Success

- 1) Since the coffered contents in the self learning materials are in local (Hindi) language, it can better connect and link the end learners. This inculcates fair understanding of the course contents among the learners group.
- 2) Local contents also links various stakeholders of open education. i.e. learners, teachers and society at large.
- 3) Implementation of zero-level distribution channel ensures high learners satisfaction in terms of collected feedback. 99% success rate of SLM distribution is through postal delivery and

1% is through study centers and headquarter. Thus cent percent success rate are in place for the implemented practices.

- 4) The success of continuous study is also evident through the count of university website hit, after the design and launch of new website in the year 2021, the website hit has crossed 17.5 lacs, suggesting that learners are fond of accessing learning materials from the website.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The postal delivery of SLM is a cumbersome task in the rural and naxal affected areas of Chhattisgarh state. The naxal affected area do not have proper internet connectivity and postal communication, Hence SLM distribution is hugely affected.

In the line of adoption and implementation of OER policy, many challenges were encountered. At initial level in order to draft an OER Policy, University was in a challenging phase of lack of information about Open Licenses on open educational resources. In collaboration with CEMCA, New Delhi, University organized workshops on Open Educational Resources. Drafted OER Policy was discussed in the workshops and finalized.