

HEALTHY PRACTICES

Best Practice I

Conducting of Saraswati Puja by Girl Students

1. Title of the Practice

This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.

“Conducting of Saraswati Puja by Girl Students”.

2. Goal

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

As far as memory goes, Saraswati Puja has been celebrated in this college. The Goddess Saraswati is the goddess of learning and the arts, and her puja is celebrated on the initiative of the students, though the staff also participate enthusiastically. For the last ten years this Puja has been celebrated in the Auditorium, so that it is accessible to the general public and to parents and guardians as well. However, till the year 2010, this Puja had been conducted the traditional way, with a hired male priest. From 2010 onwards the college has decided to conduct the Puja with the students as priests. This has been envisaged as a part of the purpose to empower girls, and encourage them to make inroads into male-dominated professions.

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.

When the idea first took root in the imagination of the Principal, she discussed it in the Teachers' Council. That was in 2009. It met with stiff resistance from several male teachers, particularly those of the Sanskrit Department. We could not implement it that year. The next year, that is, 2010, the girls were encouraged to conduct the Puja themselves. Two students learnt the manner and Sanskrit chants, and did a good job of it. The move received a lot of hype from local newspapers. The same was done in 2011. From the year 2012, the college decided to go one step forward – there would be a training session in the college itself, for seven days, and about ten students would be trained by a Sannyasi of Ramkrishna Mission. This gave a completely new dimension to the move, and the Puja therefore became qualitatively better. The same was done this year as well.

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.

A Saraswati Puja sub-committee is formed at the beginning of the session in the Teachers' Council. Student representatives are also included in this committee. The entire job is divided into two – the Puja itself, and the Khichuri Bhog (which is held about a week later, and includes all the 2,500 students and staff of the college). Two groups of teachers are put in charge of these two sections of the Saraswati Puja celebrations.

The first group has an added responsibility – that of arranging the training of the students who will conduct the Puja. The Ramkrishna Mission was extremely helpful, and lauded the initiative of the college of encouraging women priests in the campus. They sent a sannyasi and a teacher to train the group of eight girls to conduct the Puja. The training included the chanting of mantras in such a perfect way, that the students can recite them on the microphone for all to hear. The training was aimed at giving the message that even for conducting a Puja there must be seriousness of approach and perfection of technique. On the day of the Puja these girls' performance on the microphone was exemplary.

This manner of conducting Saraswati Puja generated a lot of interest among the students, and there was record attendance in the Auditorium on that day. Public feedback showed that on the whole the general public appreciated the move, though it has so far been wrongly thought that the public will not accept girls as priests.

On the evening of Saraswati Puja a Rangoli competition was organized, and the burst of colour that ensued not only displayed the talents of the students, it also served to beautify the huge Auditorium hall.

After the Puja was over, the Khichuri Bhog was held seven days later. It was open for all the students, staff, and well wishers of the college, and 1600 people had khichuri on that day. The entire process was planned and conducted by the students, and though they did not actually cook the meal, they took the entire responsibility of distribution on themselves. This, too, was a great success.



Saraswati Puja being conducted by girls



Cultural Function



Contribution to the Rangoli competition

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.

To organize Saraswati Puja with girl priests is an innovative step, aimed at assisting the empowerment of girls, and give them encouragement to encroach on male-dominated fields or professions. In Purulia, one of most backward districts of the country, using girl priests for a public puja is absolutely unheard of. The fact that it is successful has been tested ever since 2010, but this year we went one step forward, and arranged for expert trainers for the priests who would conduct the Puja. The success of this venture is seen in three ways –

- a) The manner of conducting the Puja was technically faultless.
- b) The general public accepted the matter wholeheartedly, and several people from outside came to the college for Pushpanjali.
- c) The students showed great enthusiasm, and came in large numbers to attend the Puja.

The Saraswati Puja of Nistarini College has received wide coverage in local newspapers.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

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

A Saraswati Puja fund is created at beginning of each year from the fees collected from the students. This fund is used both for the Puja and the Khichuri Bhog. As such, even without too much luxury, this fund is enough to meet up with the costs.

The only problem that has been faced regarding this step has occurred because of social superstition and narrowness of outlook. It is a sorrowful matter that a number of teachers (from the Sanskrit Dept) strongly opposed the move, and refused to attend the Puja. Even though most of the public accepted the idea enthusiastically, there were some local priests who openly

opposed girls performing puja. But we are fortunate that this number is extremely low, and on the whole the students were given the message that girls can do anything.

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.

Any institution, without exception, can implement such programmes in the college. In Women's colleges and girls' schools, especially, this idea can be implemented, and will be beneficial in the long run, to promote women's empowerment and prevent gender disparity.

8. Contact Details

Name of the Principal: **Dr. Indrani Deb**

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Best Practices – 2

Free Vocational and Empowerment Courses for the Students

1. Title of the Practice

This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.

“Free Vocational and Empowerment Courses for the students”.

2. Goal

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

The purpose for organizing Vocational Courses is to make the students better oriented to the job market. More than half the students of this college come from very poor families, and from villages where they are unable to obtain even the basic needs of education, such as electricity. As such, a simple graduation degree is not enough for them, as they are neither computer literate, nor are they able to communicate in English. We are, moreover, aware that the girls of today must be able to acquire confidence enough to move around and travel alone. To that purpose, we have initiated three Certificate courses for the students, free of cost – Communicative English, Basic Computer Course, and Karate training. The first two of these courses had been in effect in the college since 2003, but the Karate training programme has begun from 2009.

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.

To teach the students of Purulia district Communicative English or Computers is itself a challenge. Even though all the students have been admitted after having passed the Higher Secondary exams, it is a sorry state of matters that they are unable to communicate for even five minutes in English with any person. The Communicative English programme is co-ordinated to simply teach the students some basic communication skills, and situational conversations. To this end, the Principal, who herself oversees these classes, has even printed a basic textbook, different from those in the market, and written with these students in mind.

The same can be said of the Computer programme. Most of the students of the college have not touched a computer in their life. As such, to cater to such students one has to begin from describing a computer and its hardware. The course is framed by keeping in mind the very basics from which to begin, and to move on to Internet training.

The purpose of the Karate programme is to teach self-defence and self-confidence. As such, Belt exams form a part of the follow-up programme, not a part of its basic programme.

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 three courses that are conducted, have three Co-ordinators, who frame the time-tables, modify the course-work, and co-ordinate the trainers. If a trainer is required, who is not from the institution, an interview is conducted on the basis of an advertisement in the local papers, to choose a fit person to take the classes. Such interviews have been conducted for Computer and Karate trainers. The Communicative English classes are taken by the teachers of the college itself, including Part-time teachers and Guest lecturers.

Classes are held outside normal college hours, or when the students do not have any curricular classes. A time-table is framed and maintained, and attendance is taken. For the Communicative English course, batches are fixed with about 40 students each, while the

Computer Course has batches of 25 each, so that two per computer may be accommodated. The Karate training has no separate batches.

All classes are free of cost for the students. The college pays for the teachers at the rate of Rs.200/- per class. The students will have to pay only for the Course material at a nominal cost, and for examinations conducted at the end of the course.

These courses may be considered as innovative, as they are under the Career-Counselling Cell, which then picks up from where the courses end, and counsel the students regarding their future preferences. Moreover, three such courses being conducted free of cost for the benefit of all the students, with no bar whatsoever, is certainly new.



Karate training class in the Auditorium

Constraints and Problems

Of course, we have to face limitations and problems. As the classes of these courses have to necessarily have to be set outside normal class hours, it poses problems for those who come to college from long distances. There are several students who would like to join, but are unable to do so, as their last bus goes at 4.00 p.m. In the same way, in a Communicative English class or a Computer class, the standard differs extremely. A student who has a basic ability to communicate sits side by side with one who will not open her mouth out of terror. A trainer has to cater to all types. It is also true that the extra financial burden on the college has to be taken into account. However, taking into account the long-term benefit for the students, the courses are kept running.

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.

Previously, the Computer Course had been conducted by outside agencies like WEBEL, who had taken fees from the students, though these fees had been nominal. WEBEL itself had conducted the course and held exams, then issuing a certificate after completion of the course. The Communicative English course had been always conducted in the college, and certification provided to the students after an exam. Karate courses, too, had been held on the basis of Belt exams. However, recently, these courses have been made free on the basis of a GB resolution, and the students are given certification from the college. As a result, the participation of students has increased fourfold. Success of the students depends on their performance in the classroom and then final tests. It is our pride that more than 80% of the students are certified as pass.

The results indicate that students from an area as backward as Purulia, should be given a different type of training in these areas, different from the established methods of training afforded in institutes. Also, conducting such courses with special components for backward students, benefits a large section, and makes them better equipped for the job market. Making them free also helps the most needy of the students.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

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

Three Certificate courses running consecutively, and that are open to all and free of cost, are bound to face problems. If we keep in mind the purpose of making all the students of the college computer literate, and teach them all to communicate properly in English, and also, at the same time, to give them self-defence training, it becomes difficult to arrange time-tables out of college hours for all the students. Many of the students come from long distances, and even if they wish to join these programmes, they cannot, as their last bus leaves at 4.00 pm, and they cannot arrive before 10.00 a.m. Moreover, it is difficult for the trainers to cater to large batches of students, giving each students equal attention. In the Computer course, the number of computers in the computer centre is 12. As such, more than 24 students cannot be accommodated per batch. The number of batches has now come up to 11. The timing becomes a grave problem.

In spite of the good intentions of the college, the funding does become a problem. The increase in the number of batches also means increase in the remuneration for trainers. The college is funding the entire project, and the budget now is Rs.20,000/- per month for all the courses. If the UGC sanctions funds for vocational course in the future, that will be a great help, and we will be able to increase the number of trainers, if this is done.

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.

If anyone wishes to implement the opening of Vocational courses free of cost for the general body of students in his institution, he must first ensure that an amount be fixed for this purpose in the budget. This will allow proper utilization of the fund, and will give the co-ordinators an idea of the amount they may spend. The Co-ordinators must be able to dedicate extra time to this project, and must therefore by necessity be a local. For this, he may be paid a small honorarium

for the extra duty. A Karate programme cannot run without proper trainers, and this must first be ensured before initiating the course.

8. Contact Details

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Best Practices – 3
Annual General Educational Tour

1. Title of the Practice

This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.

“Annual General Educational Tour”.

2. Goal

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

The practice of holding an educational tour for the general body of students has been continuing for, if memory and old records goes right, the last 40 years, or even more. It has been an enduring tradition begun by our predecessors, and carried on by every generation of teachers and students. Educational tours and field trips are part of the curriculum of several departments like Geography, Botany, Environmental Science, and Nutrition, and each department organizes its own tour from time to time as per requirement. However, an educational tour for all students, Arts and Science streams alike, is not prescribed in the curriculum, but is nevertheless necessary in view of the overall benefits such a tour has for the students as a whole. As such, this college has devised this policy of organizing such a tour, which is open for every students of the college, and is conducted in a formal way with the staff acting as escorts.

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.

In planning programmes for this college we have always to keep in mind the background of the students who come here to study. More than half the students come from financially weak households, and their rural background makes it difficult for them to merge with the other half, who, nevertheless, because of their urban background, become the natural leaders of the college students. A general educational tour creates just such an opportunity for the merging of all classes of the students in a formal and organized manner. Such a tour is a challenging task, as sometimes the number of participating students crosses a hundred, and it is not an easy task for the teaching and non-teaching staff who act as escorts, to guide all these students through the fortnight that is usually taken to cover the trip.

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 Annual General Educational Tour of the college has been continuing from the very beginning of recollected memory, and has become one of the conventions of the college which students look forward to every year. It is unique because such an excursion for the general body of students, particularly in a women's college, is not there in any undergraduate college. It is considered to be a good practice because it creates a sense of involvement and unification of diverse groups of students, and also creates an understanding of the wonderful historical and natural heritage of our country.

Every year, after the Teachers' Council elections are over, the sub-committees under the TC are formed. One of the sub-committees is the Excursion sub-committee, which has the huge task of organizing this annual excursion. The sub-committee has a number of members, with a Convenor and a Co-Convenor, who are given this responsibility. As the General Tour has to be held in the Winter months, the committee begins work from August itself, holding meetings, posting notices, and inviting names for the tour. The dates of the tours are so arranged as to include the maximum number of holidays in the tenure of the tour, so that classes are not hampered. Till the year 2010 the committee did the entire work – booking tickets and hotel rooms, making arrangements for food and refreshments, and planning out how to meet the health, safety, and other unique requirements of women during the course of the trip. After 2010, the committee takes the help of a travel agency. In whatever case, the utmost precautions are taken to make the tour safe, healthy, educative, and enjoyable.

Here is the tour arranged in the session 2013-14 –

20/11/13 to 27/11/13 : Kolkata → Amritsar → Jammu & Kashmir. Cost – Rs.4000/- per head.

As the above list shows, the best travel is given at the least possible cost. Sometimes even this amount is difficult for several students to bear. As such, though escorts may accompany the students free of cost as per rule, every one of the staff pays his/her own amount, and the resulting savings are divided equally among the students, so that actually they have to pay less than the amount represented above. The feedback taken from the students shows that every participant has been ecstatic about the tour, and has pronounced it as perfect in all respects. Above all, they have enjoyed the interaction with the teachers and the other students of the group.

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 very fact that this tour has been continuing for so long is the best evidence of its success. It is our aim to continue this tradition, that has been going on for so long in this college, as it has been proved to be educationally and socially beneficial for all the sections of the college. For the teachers and other staff it is an added responsibility – for it is a huge responsibility to guide so many young girls safely over an extended period – but our teachers have been happily taking this responsibility generation after generation. The students can return with an added sense of belonging and free minds more open to studies and training. Indeed, it had been more difficult earlier, before travel agents came into existence, but since 2010 the task has been eased out, though the responsibility still remains.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

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

Of course, problems are encountered in the implementation of these tours. Sometimes it is difficult to find sufficient escorts, but every year the tour is held against all odds, by convincing the staff for the sake of the students. Also, though the cost of the travel is extremely low, compared to normal costs, it is still difficult for several students to participate even though the staff do not escort the students free of cost, and divide their amount among the students to make it even cheaper. It would be even better if the students are made to submit write-ups about the tour after their return, but this is lacking, as the it is difficult to get the students together again after the return, and the teachers, too, return to their classes.

Resources are usually collected from the students in this case. This General Tour does not get any outside assistance. If such assistance is obtained for the poorer section of students, it would be far better.

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.

Any institution, without exception, can implement such programmes in the college. However, it would be better if it is implemented in Women's colleges, as guardians are still wary of sending their daughters for long excursions along with boys. In girls' colleges, the students are freer to move as a crowd, and to give them the benefits of educational tours, it will improve the quality of education greatly, and also remove the fear that students have of travelling far from home.

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Artistic Painting of Boundary wall of the college by the Students

1. Title of the Practice

This title should capture the keywords that describe the Practice.

“Artistic Painting of Boundary wall of the college by the Students”.

2. Goal

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

The outside boundary wall of the college encloses a huge space of about 6 acres, and that part of the boundary that adjoins the main road (Deshbandhu Road), which is also a National Highway, spans more than 200 feet. This boundary wall has for long been a convenient place for sticking advertisements for local messes for girls, study centres, and other shops and companies. It is also, from time to time, used for political sloganing, that is both ugly and irritating. The college therefore decided to beautify this stretch of the wall by paintings from the students themselves. Beauty is itself a protection against any kind of destructive urge, and we decided to use beauty as a weapon.

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.

About ten years back the wall had first been decorated by the students of this college as a part of a painting competition. It has been a huge success, and the wall had remained clean for several years after that. After the paint began to wear out, the wall again began to be the centre of political slogans and advertisements for vendors, making it seem dingy, dirty, and unattractive. The Principal first placed her suggestion for re-decorating the wall by the students, in an IQAC meeting, which enthusiastically welcomed the idea. The main challenge was the length of the wall, and the heat in which the work had to be done. However, the manner of carrying out the work, the cost involved, and the time table schedule were discussed in detail, and Prof. Renuka Gupta, Assoc. Prof. of the Geography dept. was given charge of completing the work with a team of students.

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.

Prof. Renuka Gupta, along with a number of teachers, formed a committee, and they collected together about thirty students who had aptitude for painting. The students were from various departments of the college, and were from both Arts and Science streams. The wall itself is divided into natural squares, and a group of five girls was allotted each square.. Oil paints were

purchased by the college as per requirement. The students were told that the themes will have to revolve around women's empowerment and achievements, and the message would have to be positive. Each group of students was told to get approval for their sketches from the teachers.

Rs.10,000/- was initially earmarked by the Finance Committee for purchasing paints for the wall, and the Principal was empowered to provide more funds as and when required. The working students would be given a small tiffin each day. The best paints were purchased, so that they would withstand extreme weather conditions throughout the year.

Another problem was the withering sun of May and June, and the suffocating heat in which the students had to work. As such, they scheduled their timings in the early morning and in the evening after 4.00 p.m. The teachers overseeing the job accompanied them all through the month-long painting session.

The result that emerged was a beautiful stretch of wall painting, that has been appreciated widely throughout Purulia and beyond. The matter has also gained press reviews in well-known newspapers like *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, *Bartaman*, and *Ganashakti*. The students and teachers had worked hard, and their repayment was a permanent stretch of beauty. Instead of dirty posters and election notices, the wall gave a message of women's empowerment and education.

In the context of Higher Education, this wall-painting is very significant. It is innovative because it speaks of beauty and positivity to the community at large, as a part of Extension Activities and Healthy Practices of the college. Also, the Hon'ble Prime Minister has announce Swatch Bharat Abhiyaan in the country. This effort by the teachers and students fulfil this national policy effectively.





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.

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The Saraswati Puja of Nistarini College has received wide coverage in local newspapers.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

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

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