Best Practices

Best Practice-I

Reorienting Teaching-Learning and Administrative Processes during COVID-19 Lockdown

Objective

Meeting the challenges posed by Work from Home practice.

Context

The College, along with the University of Delhi was shut down by Government order in the face of pandemic. The College had to rediscover its identity, practices and operations while maintaining its ethos, values, and vision and mission.

Practice

1. Pursuant to the University notice of March 13, 2020, a Staff Council meeting was convened on March 16, 2020 for strategizing how best the process of teaching learning would continue during lockdown. The Council discussed and explored all possible aspects of online teaching and their viability. Paper-wise meetings of the faculty members were held immediately to take into account the peculiar requirements of the teaching-learning in different papers and to maintain uniformity across different Class sections. It was decided that :

    a. Teachers shall ensure their availability for their students through WhatsApp/email.

    b. Class/subject wise WhatsApp groups shall be created to address the specific needs of the students.

    c. Teachers may upload the study material on the website of the College and may even upload lecture videos on YouTube and their links may be shared with the students in the larger interest.

    d. Teachers may take online classes through Zoom, Google Meet, or any other suitable platform in consultation with the class representatives.

These immediate steps helped gain grip over the disruption cause by the pandemic.

2. To take care of the psychological and emotional well-being during lockdown *Online face to face*, and Online *Chatbox* based professional Counselling services to students, teaching and non-teaching staff were provided. *Nodal officers* were appointed for formally counselling and addressing student queries, along with the designated *days* and *timings* of their availability. These were duly communicated to the students, faculty and non-teaching staff.

3. Principal opened communication with the University on Open Book Examination and Internal Assessment

4. Administrative Strategies were developed to meet the challenges during lockdown so that Financial and Administrative work flow remains smooth.

Evidence of Success

a. *Effective Second-Best Pedagogy and Timely Course Completion*: The Courses were completed well in time. Online interaction successfully replaced the Face to Face interaction. Teachers and students learnt to advance the teaching-learning process through online mode on diverse platforms. WhatsApp groups became live forums of discussion and problem solving. Google forms, google class room, MS Teams, Zoom, Webex etc. were used as platforms for class discussions, conducting webinars and other activities. Assessments were carried out to the satisfaction of teachers as well as students.

b. *Principal's Proactive Communication with University*: Principal, SRCC proactively made suggestions regarding the modalities for conducting 'internal assessments' and 'open book examinations' to the Dean Examinations, University of Delhi. Many of these Suggestions were implemented by the University.

c. *Counselling Services well-utilized*: A number of students availed the Counselling services to get over their disturbed psychological mind-sets. In fact, the effort played instrumental role in handling even the red-**flag** cases appropriately.

d. *Effective Governance Strategies*: On Administrative and Governance front payment of salaries, contractual, payments, updating of account books, liaison with regulatory and rating bodies, maintenance, security and cleanliness of the campus and its gardens continued unhindered. Bottlenecks and hiccups, if they arose, were addressed on a case-to-case basis, as per requirement.

Problems Encountered, Resources and Progress

It was on March 10, 2020 that the Government of India notified that with affect from March 13, 2020 all travellers coming from China, Italy, Germany, France, Iran, South Korea and Spain shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days. While it was a major official recognition of the problem of COVID pandemic, the media reports from a number of countries were contributing to creation of an environment of apprehension, worry and of-course fear. Our students were on pre- Holi semester break from 9th March 2020. A vast majority of outstation students (who constitute 78% of total student strength) had left for their home towns. Then came the Lockdown – a response in which life was being given precedence over livelihood. The lockdown being an unusual situation, catapulted the prevalent processes into a state of shock for some time; it appeared as if there was going to be a complete breakdown of systems. The students were caught unawares in that, the outstation students while hoping to return back after vacation, had left their books, notes and study material in Delhi. Teachers had to adapt to a new mode

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of interaction – online teaching. There was anxiety and angst as faculty and students had to perforce experiment with new tools, methods, techniques and platforms. The problem though appeared to be of gargantuan proportions initially; however, proved only ephemeral. The College demonstrated phoenix like resilience and adapted to the new situation with great aplomb, ensuring continuity of operations at the College, and well-being of teachers, students and staff by re-orienting methods, processes and strategies across diverse domains, primarily including the following:

1. Management of Teaching-Learning during lockdown
2. Open Book Examination (OBE) and Internal Assessment(IA)
3. Psychological and emotional well-being during lockdown through counselling and addressing student queries, along with the designated *days* and *timings* of their availability
4. Administrative Strategies during lockdown

1. Management of Teaching-Learning during the Lockdown:

Anticipating the forthcoming crisis, a Staff Council meeting was convened for strategizing how best the process of teaching learning would continue during lockdown. It was decided in the meeting that Faculty, in addition to providing E-Resources through the institutional website, would explore and adopt other methods such as taking online classes through Google or Zoom apps, create class/subject wise WhatsApp groups to address the specific needs of the students. In addition to being available during their stipulated academic hours, faculty members ensured teaching-learning by adopting multi-modal channels to deliver the curriculum to the students. Consequently, a mail was sent to students (with Faculty on copy) informing them of the modalities for accessing E-Resources through the Institutional website.

Students from North eastern part of the country were facing difficulty in accessing reading material and books. The College took it upon itself to make the study material available to them to address this problem. The study material was sent to students based in Lower Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh; Sichey, East Sikkim; Darjeeling, West Bengal; and Guwahati, Dibrugarh & Hojai in Assam.

Additionally, two separate *Google Surveys* were conducted (one each for Faculty and Students) enquiring participation, perception, effectiveness, and satisfaction due to paradigm shift in teaching learning modalities because of lockdown.

i. *Faculty Survey Findings*: Findings indicated that most *Faculty members* were adopting multiple mediums of teaching learning, with the most preferred channel being uploading of E-content (presentations, study materials, notes, question banks, assignments), followed by instant messaging (WhatsApp, Telegram), and online platforms/classes (Zoom/Hangouts). On their perception towards student participation, it was found that about 35% of the times, it was higher than 80%. Further, about 60% of the faculty was satisfied with the current modes of teaching

learning continuity process during COVID times while about 35% felt somewhat satisfied. 5% of Faculty was though not satisfied with the system of Online Teaching. Common faculty issues included lack of internet connectivity; inherent nature of the subject taught which necessitated 'chalk and talk' classroom teaching style; inadequate student response rate; and lack of access by students to online facilities.

ii. *Student Survey Findings*: Based on Students Survey (500 responses), findings indicated that students too preferred a multi-modal approach for learning. Amongst the most preferred medium was online classes (51%), followed by instant messaging platforms (24%) and E-Resources (19%). In addition, about 86% of the students had gone through the online resources provided by faculty members. Further, while about 80% of students faced no issues, remaining 20% faced issues, amongst which the most important concern pertained to network connectivity, especially for those living in rural areas or far-off places.

Further, **Students Society activities** continued, though the platforms had switched to Virtual Space. Though the spirit of Physical interactions had dampened, nonetheless, on account of blurring (if not complete disappearing) of geographical boundaries, our students were able to attract several speakers spread across geography.

Additionally, for facilitating the students while writing their Open Book **Examination** in an efficient and hassle-free manner, the College created 8 teams comprising two faculty members each (akin to invigilators in a physical mode of Examination). There were 6 teams dedicated to the B.com (Hons.) students and 2 teams were specifically for B.A. Eco (Hons.) students. Each faculty team was the point of contact for a definite number of students. The contact information of the respective faculty members for each group was also shared on the College website and was widely circulated amongst the students. In addition to this, all the faculty teams were also provided the contact details of the students allotted to them.

A WhatsApp group of the faculty teams along with the Nodal Officer (OBE) of the college was also created to ensure a fast dissemination of information and timely redressal of the students' queries and other concerns. Often, queries pertained to difficulties in uploading answer scripts on the University portal.

2. **Principal's pro-active approach to Open Book Examination and Internal Assessment:**
Understanding and appreciating the concerns of the students and faculty regarding assessment modalities, the Principal proactively remained in touch with the Dean Examination. While the apprehensions and anxieties of the students were communicated to the Dean Examination, alongside recommendations were proposed. Many of these

were actually implemented by the University as well. Two such communications are hereby provided:

Mail dated April 16, 2020: The Principal, proactively wrote to Dean Examination to reconsider the erstwhile criteria adopted for Internal Assessment, simultaneously suggesting that in view of the lockdown, wherein challenges are immense, if the *Format of Internal Assessment* could be made simpler. For instance:

1. Instead of the three existing components, viz., Class Tests, Tutorial Test and Attendance, if only two components may be submitted. In this case, Class Tests and Tutorial Test could be merged as one, and Attendance could be the second component.

2. Alternatively, may further propose that given the exceptional circumstances, if flexibility is provided to have only One Component of Internal Assessment, it may be **the most preferred option**.

Pleased to inform that the University did change the criteria for Internal assessment.

Mail dated May 22, 2020: The Principal wrote to the Dean Examination that to mitigate the students anxiety pertaining to Open Book Examination and also to ensure that Online Exams can be conducted without glitches, the following was proposed:

1. *Dummy Online Examination*: Introduction of 'dummy online exams' so that the students are apprised of various glitches that may come up in the process of online examinations (such as bandwidth and disruptions), so as to foster amicable resolution of the same before the final advent of actual online examinations.

2. *Webinars for Students Education*: Webinars on taking open book online examinations must be conducted by the University for facilitating students understanding of the same.

3. *Sample Questions*: Sample questions be shared with the students basis which Open Book Examination will be held.

4. *Option of Retaining Marks/Grade*: In case online exams are compulsory, then students may be given the option of retaining their Average of previous V Semester Marks, if Grades under Online Examination are lower by say 10% or so, as compared to past evaluation based on Offline Examination in previous Semesters. Adequate weightage may also be given to the Internal Assessment of Current Semester Marks. Surely, this shall enable address issues of non-availability of books, access to E Resources and internet connectivity, should students perform badly in the Online Examination.

Pleased to inform that the first three recommendations were also adopted by the University. This helped the students to adapt to this uncertain phase with positivity.

3. Psychological and Emotional Well-being during Lockdown:

The College proactively took steps prior to and during the current COVID-19 situation towards commitment of emotional and psychological well-being of its stakeholders, especially the students. For understandable reasons students were not too comfortable in the new scenario of uncertainty and ambiguity. In September 2018, the college had entered into a collaboration with YourDOST, a comprehensive counselling service provider to provide both *On Campus*, *Online face to face*, and *Online Chatbox* based Counselling services (psychological, as well as, career) to students, teaching and non-teaching staff.

To address anxiety and stress, especially of the students, during the lockdown, a coordinated strategy was formulated and implemented by the Counselling Services Committee under the aegis of Dr. Rachna Jawa. Amongst others, the following steps were taken:

i. A Webinar on Emotional Wellness in the Time of COVID-19 for Students was conducted.
ii. Regular communication with students regarding availability of counselling services.
iii. Two senior faculty members, Ms. Smita Sharma and Dr. Rachna Jawa were appointed as *nodal officers* for formally counselling and addressing student queries, along with the designated *days* and *timings* of their availability.

4. Administrative Strategies during Lockdown:

Necessary adaptations were made to carry out regular and routine college administrative work, despite work from home scenario, and sometimes even Lockdown.

i. *Routine Office Tasks*: Principal, Office of the Principal, AO Admin and AO Accounts continued to handle routine matters and also communication with students, teachers, the University and the UGC. Computer Centre (CC) too took over the additional burden of uploading E Resources competently by cobbling up the layers of administrative levels and routines. To enable the Faculty to upload their E resources directly and seamlessly, the CC framed modalities, negating the present requirement of routing it through the CC and Principal office.

ii. *Security and Safety*: For managing security, security guards continued to be on duty. Guards, were granted in-house services of staying within campus during lockdown and provided necessary logistic support.

iii. *Cleanliness of Premises*: For cleanliness of premises, including watering of plants and garbage disposal, minimal staff was asked to report for duty while maintaining necessary protocols.

iv. *Official Passes for Commuting during Lockdown*: Permission was sought for 20 Employees, including the Principal, AO Admin and AO Finance from Deputy

Commissioner of Police, New Delhi District to commute during Lock-down/Curfew to perform official duty for disposing/attending most important work, whenever necessary.

v. *Hostel Facilities*: Both the Boy's and Girl's Hostels were closed.

vi. *Principal-Student Instant Connectivity*: WhatsApp Groups were created wherein the Members were the Principal and various Year-wise and Subject-wise Class Representatives. Correspondingly, six such Groups existed, three each for Commerce and Economics stream.

Consequently, no crisis arose on the administrative front though construction of Auditorium and other infrastructure projects did get impacted. Additionally, the Annual Day, to be celebrated in Physical Mode in April 2020, was postponed.

Best Practice-II : Installation of Solar Power Generation Panels with a capacity of 425. 5 KW in association with Tata Power Renewable Ltd.

Objective

The objective is to make a contribution towards developing cultural ethos in which the ideal of creating a physical environment with low carbon footprint is implemented by the College through generation of clean and renewable energy for environmental protection.

Context

Society expects that educational institutions which are torch bearers of knowledge and wisdom, should present examples of adopting environmental protection practices by way of taking concrete steps for the reduction of carbon footprint. In pursuit of its commitment to environmental protection, the College has launched a program to adopt renewable energy sources to meet its electricity requirements.

Practice

The College Installed a solar energy generation plant with 1310 solar panels-- one of largest in the University of Delhi, in the College. The electricity generated by the solar panels is being utilised to meet electricity needs.

Evidence of Success

The Solar Power project, constructed without compromising the aesthetic of the campus, possesses a capacity of **425kw** generating **1500 units of** electricity per day which constitutes about 45% of the College's net energy requirements. This initiative not only reduces the dependence of the College on grid- based electricity systems but also ensures that the College is able to reduce its carbon footprint. The college has generated and exported over **5, 85,000 units** since the commencement of the plant, resulting in cost saving of **Rs. 47,67,750/ (Forty Seven Lakhs Sixty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty only)** and reduction in Carbon Dioxide emission of over **450 tonnes**.

Problems Encountered, Resources and Progress

As a proactive institution concerned towards environment protection and making college premises an eco-friendly zone, Centre for Green Initiatives, SRCC launched a one of its kind initiative "SOLAR POWER PROJECT" for generating electricity using solar panels in the college. The initiative is under a 25 years agreement with Tata Power Renewable Ltd. (TPREL) totally funded by Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd. (TPDDL) for generating electricity in the College premises for in house purposes as well as selling out. The panelling commenced in October 2019, which is expected to get full capacity installation done by 2020.Owing to lockdown and pandemic the progress has slowed down but savings on use of conventional energy usage is continuing unbridled.

Project Overview: Under this drive around 1310 panels were to be installed over rooftops of the college building, sports complex, girl's hostel building and boy's hostel building. The total generation capacity of the plant is **425kw** which generates around **1500 units** total per day in favourable weather conditions meeting around **45 percent** of college energy requirements.

Implementation: The planning, coordination and execution of the project required close coordination both within the College and between the College and agencies responsible for implementation of the project. A faculty member representative from the Centre for Green Initiatives, SRCC was appointed as the Project Liaison Officer for the solar project. Non-Teaching Members of the Centre for Green Initiatives, SRCC from the Administrative and Accounts Office facilitated the required administrative and finance formalities required for the completion of the project. Extensive coordination and communication were undertaken by faculty members with agencies such as Tata Power Ltd.

Project Progress: The project commenced on trial run in March 2020 and since its launch the initiative has enabled Shri Ram College of Commerce to meet its 100% electricity requirements from in-house sources in an eco-friendly way. The college has generated and exported over 5, 85,000 units since the commencement of the plant, resulting in cost saving of Rs. 47,67,750/ (Forty Seven Lakhs Sixty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty only) and reduction in Carbon Dioxide emission of over 450 tonnes.