

Best Practices

Best Practice 1

1. Title of the Practice: Peer Education System - From Me to You

The national and international student population of CHRIST (Deemed to be University) is, hailing from diverse cultures and socio-economic back grounds and it is always a challenge for the management to strengthen and help the students to go through their educational career. As 60% of our students are outstation scholars who are unequipped to handle the luring & frivolous urban life. City of Bangalore has become a hub for unrestricted use of alcohol & other addictive substances. Sudden taste of freedom & exposure to the adversities of urban lifestyle make youngsters the easy victims of addictions and irresponsible sexual behaviour. In this context and in the new emerging world of the 21st century it is a phenomenon that young people appreciate and are influenced in positive ways by a peer-led intervention if it is well-designed and properly supervised hence serving as a peer educator provides a challenging, rewarding opportunity to young people to develop their leadership skills, gain the respect of their peers, and improve their own knowledge base and skills.

Objectives:

- To reach out to youth through their own peers.
- To empower youth to make healthy choices in lifestyles, relationships and safety
- To enable the students, balance academic and social pressures
- To enable the students develop healthy self-esteem, thus helping them realize their goals in life,
- To empower them build nurturing relationships that leads to fulfilling lives.

Peer education as a programme involves students of the second year under graduate programme who are invited to join the programme. They are required to register their names by filling in an application form which includes a brief write up on their purpose of joining the course. The shortlisted candidates are called for an interview to assess their motivation, leadership qualities, & commitment. The selected students undergo 35 hours of formal training sessions on topics like Life skills, Reproductive health and Personal Safety. Their curriculum broadly covers

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Esteem,
- Goal Setting: Decision Making
- Body Image
- Relationships
- Safety in intimate relationships
- Personal safety
- Child sexual abuse
- Values & intelligences
- Addictions & substance abuse
- Evolution of human body
- Why two sexes?
- Changes in puberty - emotional & physical
- Pregnancy
- Sexual Orientation,
- Sexual Identity, Gender Bias



The methodology includes lectures, role plays, group discussions, interactive sessions, group projects field trips and mentoring sessions. As a next step the trained peer educators deliver formal and informal sessions in their own classes on the topics like relationships, reproductive health, substance abuse, personal safety etc.

The uniqueness of this programme indicates that the peer educators themselves are empowered to handle their lives better and make appropriate choices and decisions for themselves. It helps them increase their knowledge level and have a clear understanding on the topics covered. Further it enhances their interpersonal relationships, communication skills and most all the confidence to interact with cross-section of people. The students who attend the Peer Education classes are more receptive and find it relevant and effective. It also helps them develop positive attitude and have clarity on the topics covered. Students also feel that peer educators understand their perspective better than adults. Since the topics discussed during the sessions are related to their present life it becomes interactive and lively and students openly share their perspectives without any inhibition.

Through the formal sessions the peer educators make their presence known among the peers so that they access them whenever they are in need. This can lead to many healthier interactions in future between the peers without having the feeling of being judged.

Most importantly as an integrated educational programme the peer educators are assessed based on their formal sessions and credits are awarded to them. The evaluation of the programme is carried out based on a random collection of feedback from the students after each session for further decision-making process and to improve the effectiveness of the programme.

Peer education programme has proven very effective in the development of students both personally and academically. It is to be noted all the Peer Educators were part of the focused group discussion and the peer educators unanimously agreed that there was a huge hike in their confidence level & self-esteem. The programme has positively affected their perspectives. It also gave great clarity in terms of their goals in life.

Best Practice 2

Wikipedia in Education: Making Indian Languages Digital

Objectives of the Practice:

Universities in India played a pivotal role in transferring Indian languages from oral culture to print culture. A similar need was felt by Christ University to move the Indian languages from print to digital in today's context. At another level an analysis of the curriculum of the Indian languages taught on campus and in India, in general, revealed that the languages had primarily limited themselves to teaching literature and as a result the social science and science knowledge production happened only in English. To address these three key issues University introduced Wikipedia article writing as part of the Indian language curriculum from November 2013. It was hoped that apart from addressing these issues, the initiative would create a new model for Indian language teaching in India.



The Context:

It was decided at the beginning of the initiative that it would be administered through the language teachers and it would involve all the students. One of the issues that needed to be addressed was that the language teachers had little exposure to Wikipedia and concepts of digital knowledge production. The idea that Indian languages in higher education need to move beyond their literary roots and bases had to be made clear. Involving over 1200 language students simultaneously, training them in Wikipedia typing in Indian languages and the structure of a standard Wikipedia article, availability of computers, and most importantly assessment of the Wikipedia article writing process and the final article in tune with the nature of the activity.

The Practice:

To get the required technical support in collaboration with the Wikimedia Foundation, Christ University signed an MOU with the Centre for Internet and Society, Bengaluru. Workshops were conducted to help the language teachers learn the need of such an initiative, socio-political changes brought about by the digital technologies and the way the digital technologies were transforming higher education and Indian language scene. This was followed by workshops for students.

Evidence of Success:

The model that was evolved at Christ University has been replicated in SDM College, Ujire, Oxford College of Engineering.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

Lack of adequate technical knowledge among language teachers is one of the major constraints faced in implementing this project. However, workshops which target this issue could be arranged to alleviate this problem. Another issue faced is the non-availability of requisite infrastructure to implement this project on a wider scale encompassing the students of other colleges and universities.

Notes:

The project has had resounding success at Christ University and could be emulated in other institutes of higher education. As mentioned earlier, a few colleges have already adopted the practice after careful examination of the model used by Christ University

