



Best Practices

**THUNCHAN MEMORIAL GOVERNMENT
COLLEGE TIRUR**

Affiliated to University of Calicut

Best Practice 1

Green Initiatives for a Sustainable Community

1. Title of the Practice

Green Initiatives for a Sustainable Community

2. Objectives of the Practice

The objective behind the practice was to orient the students and staff towards sustainable goals of development through institutionally viable green initiatives. The underlying principle of the enterprise was mutual cooperation to create



tangible community linkages between the institution and the neighborhood with an aspiration to see similar models replicated by the participants in their own local communities with limited resources. The conceptual foundation of this practice relied on the ecological wisdom found in indigenous knowledge systems as well as in modern day science that humankind can survive and flourish only through maintaining interconnectedness with one another and with nature.

3. The Context

The design and implementation of the practice met with some practical challenges: Firstly, it required some formal and informal deliberations to fix a suitable area within the campus for organic farming and herbal tree planting. Secondly, the unsuitability of the sandy soil of the



coastal region for cultivation presented some difficulty. Thirdly, considering the fact that most of the students were day scholars who were mostly unavailable after college timings, consistent student involvement had to be ensured beforehand. Fourthly, a lack of expert knowledge in farming and related matters necessitated



external guidance, and fifthly no funds were available for the institution for the easier execution of the project. Sixthly, finding a local market for selling the produce was crucial. Finally, the farming had to be undertaken without the use of

plastic, and any non degradable waste generated had to be processed in an environment friendly manner.

4. The Practice

The cultivation of an organic vegetable garden was done in two phases under the leadership of NSS volunteers. The plot of almost one hundred square feet for the garden was laid near the main entrance of the college for maximum visibility, involvement and ease of supervision. The Krishi Bhavan nearby, a wing of the Department of Agriculture on request extended their expert guidance during every stage of the cultivation, and following their advice drip irrigation method was adopted for effective water management. The first phase started in November and the crop was harvested in January followed by a local sale of the produce by the students themselves. Altogether, the plot yielded vegetables for some four harvests which were all sold locally. The second phase, started by the end of January, ended in March, but the outbreak of Covid-19 made it impossible to hold sales. Hence, the vegetables were provided to the community kitchen in the neighborhood. Concerns of plastic waste management with regard to the farming and selling proved to be minimal, and besides a system of plastic waste disposal was put in place through the Vettom Gramapanchayath Shuchithwa Padhathi , a project of the governing local



body funded by the government. The plastic waste in the campus was collected by the workers of this project and effectively processed and disposed .The initial steps for another green initiative, planting herbal trees, were also set in motion with a request for permission submitted before the Forest department. As the project required clearing some Casuarina trees in the campus, their prior permission had to be obtained. .

Discussions for dry land paddy cultivation in the campus too were initiated with the

Krishi Bhavan. All of the green initiatives received consistent supervision and assistance from the NSS Programme coordinators of the college. Today, in the Higher Education Sector in India experiential learning is valued over mere theoretical knowledge; a good evidence for this is Ability Enhancement Course/ Audit Course which are mandatory for many an undergraduate and post graduate programmes. In the syllabi of University of Calicut to which the college is affiliated, it is customary to include an audit course on Environmental Studies. It would be in the best interest of the students if such a course was supplemented with an opportunity for hands-on-training through organic farming and cultivation. Perhaps, environmental knowledge and values that endures are best imbibed on ground.



5. Evidence of success The organic farming was a success in the first phase. The vegetable yield was large enough for four successive harvests and brought a modest profit. The profit was in turn utilized for starting the second phase of cultivation in a larger area. The collaboration with Krishi Bhavan enhanced the success as they lend the expertise and a small financial assistance to the project. Enthusiastic participation of the other students in the programme apart from the NSS volunteers, including the College Union, showed that the programme was greatly appreciated. Even though the second phase of the programme was not as huge a success financially as the first phase, yet the fact that we were able to contribute to the community kitchen during the pandemic remains a gain. The vegetables were also bought by the staff and the local Kudubhashree unit who ran the college canteen which affirmed their goodwill

and cooperation towards the project. Preliminary discussions with Krishi Bhavan on dry land paddy cultivation indicated their willingness in partnering with the college on future projects. The positive reviews and cooperation received for the project suggest that these and similar initiatives can be undertaken by the institution on a larger scale successfully.

6. Problems encountered and resources required

One of the main problems encountered was the lack of sufficient funds for the organic farming programme. It was difficult to take care of the garden during vacations as the students and staffs were not available. Planting of herbal trees in the campus got postponed because of



the delay in procuring permission from the Forest department due to lengthy official procedures, Soon after, the unexpected outbreak of Covid 19 caused the project to be set aside along with the other one on dry land paddy cultivation. Implementation of the practice required the pooling together of human, natural and financial capital available to the institution to promote a model of sustainable living.

Best Practice II

Shravyam

1. Title of the Practice

Shravyam

2. Objectives of the Practice

The aim of the project was to generate audio resources for the visually challenged learners especially in the regional language. This practice was implemented with the objective to mitigate the difficulties that differently abled students and faculty often encounter within academic institutions due to the non availability of such resources. The situation indicated that there was some disparity in the distribution and accessibility of knowledge sources for the differently abled and it was the responsibility of an institution for higher education to take immediate measures to assuage the gap through equal opportunity enterprises like Shravyam.

3. The Context

Shravyam was conceived by a visually challenged faculty of the Malayalam department from the hurdles he faced in accessing teaching resources in the regional language. Unlike in English, very little audio resources were available in Malayalam language that students and faculty could easily access. A number of differently abled students were being admitted every year into the institution in the seats reserved for them. Even though the students received individual grants, there was no other project as such implemented by the government in higher education institutions to cater to their particular needs, and no special funds allocated for the same. Though

the governmental aids and policies safeguarded the rights of the differently abled at the entry level into higher education institutions, how they really navigated the spaces within academia depend greatly on the institutional support and facilities provided to them in a non- discriminatory manner.

4. The Practice

Shravyam began in 2016 with a collection of around hundred audio books and recorded expert lectures on various academic topics. The books available were often subject books included in the recommended reading list of the Malayalam syllabus of the University and similar books on specific academic areas or authors. Yet, books of general interest like novels and short stories too were included. The lectures in the collection were on diverse topics and specimens of classical and folk music to facilitate the study of meters and genres of literature are part of the recordings. From 2017 onwards, audio compilations of all the important talks and seminars held in the college were added to the repertoire. A few faculties, many students and some volunteers from outside the institution had contributed recordings of books for the project over the years. Initially, the recordings were made using recording devices, but with the easy availability of android phones the recordings are now done using them. The recordings were carried out on a priority basis, considering the students' demand for specific materials. They were done completely voluntarily and as no financial assistance is available for the project, payments were not possible. Currently the collection has over five hundred books in audio folders that can be shared digitally. Students of the college as well as differently abled students and faculty from other institutions access these resources via emails and social networking platforms. The resources are also open to other students and many of them have been beneficiaries of this project. The collection of audio books and learning materials under Shravyam has been growing slowly but steadily and the

immediate target before the team is to amass more than one thousand books in the shortest time. The practicality of expanding the collection to other subject areas is also under consideration.

5. Evidence of success

The project was a success as illustrated by the growing number of audio resources in the collection. The students utilizing the resources had increased over the years and the demands for specific titles from them prove that they found it useful. The team had been consistently sharing resources digitally following the requests of students from other institutions. The project played a significant role in trying to create equal opportunities for the differently abled and in transforming the institutional practices in more democratic ways. The involvement of students, faculty members and other volunteers in the project showed that they felt part of the team and wished to contribute towards supporting the differently abled amongst us. The significant participation of student volunteers was heartening as they discharged a social responsibility and in the process seemed to be more aware of the rights and needs of their fellow citizens. The digital platforms available today also had a huge part in the success as it is technology that made these resources readily available to more beneficiaries.

6. Problems encountered and resources required

The time needed for recording audio books and the effort required often resulted in a small delay in providing the demanded resources. And as the contributors were mostly students who had their own course requirements to fulfill, some delay was inevitable. Because of the lack of funds for the purpose, no professional help could be sought to finish the recordings more quickly. Additional volunteers will be required if the project is to meet the next target of expanding the collection to one

thousand audio books. No computers with talking software are available specifically for the project now, but this is an essential resource if the project is to be taken to the next level. Yet another requirement is that, Shravyam be given a space within the audio visual room so that the students could easily access them, the way they access books from the general library.