Best Practices I

Open House – "*Shastrayaan*" – Academia-Public interfaces

1. *Objectives of the Practice*

The Open House "Shastrayaan" aims to create a distinguished academic environment that is not only limited to academic excellence, but also includes other aspects relating to creativity, and the development of talents, abilities, and skills of both university community and society. The events main objectives included: reinforcing the university's social responsibility values towards its students, scholars, faculty and employees, providing the public to experience the activities of the University, providing a socializing opportunity for university community members, and strengthening bonds among various university community members; in addition to: breaking barriers between society through meeting in a social and informal setting, and positive and collaborative participation in intellectual, cultural, athletic and entertainment activities.

2. *The Context*

Through the introduction of Open House event in 2018 and its continuation in 2019, the University aimed to strengthen the linkages between larger society and academia. There was a constant demand from the public outside of the campus to know about the research programmes and events of the University. The University has decided to make such programmes more informative and useful in the coming years. With this intention, the university has introduced *Shastrayaan* with a new head of account in the Budget of the University with a specified allocation. The Programme was planned and executed with the active and harmonious participation of the students and teaching and non-teaching staff of the University, in co-operation with the University authorities.

3. *The Practice*

The following programmes were arranged by the 23 Departments and 5 Centres of Studies of the University for the Public who visited the University during the open house event in 2017- 2018:

- Power point presentations at all Departments explaining the nature of teaching, learning and research of the Department
- Video presentations about the Departments
- Exhibitions of Books, journals
- Photo exhibitions and posters of field research data collected by scholars of History Department
- Exhibitions of rare manuscripts, pre-historic artefacts, pot-sherds and coins by the History Department
- Exhibition of everyday objects ,tools and implements of households and farm production of yester- years by Department of History
- Exhibitions of lab equipment
- Participatory programmes for the public

- Shows arranged by students
- Performance literacy programme by Theatre, Dance departments
- *Raga parichayam* programme by Music Department
- Live demonstration of paintings by Painting Department
- Live demonstration of wellness and self-defence skills by Physical Education Department
- An exhibition of Paintings by the students
- An All Kerala Painting competition for school children
- Gender Sensitisation workshop for elected members from local bodies
- Exhibition of medals and shields awarded to students in various competitions
- Exhibition of albums of seminars, workshops and extension lectures done in each Department
- Exhibition of PhD theses and M Phil dissertations submitted by the students
- Brochures were prepared on the basic information about the University in general and Department wise
- Department of Languages exhibited huge posters of prominent writers and poets along with their quotes
- Displayed the forthcoming plans of the Department
- Displayed the scope and aims of each Department

The following programmes were arranged by the 23 Departments and 5 Centres of Studies of the University for the public who visit the University during the open house event in the academic year 2018-2019:

- Video presentation of music and of musical instruments
- Poster exhibition of *Punarbhavam* Project by the Department of Social Work
- Video Presentation of Peter Brooke's *Mahabharata* by the Department of Theatre
- A talk on *Social Commitments and Responsibilities Among Youth* organised by the Department of Sanskrit General
- Self Defence and wellness programmes by the Department of Physical Education
- *Kootam*- a focus group discussion on the Social History of Kalady and the aftermath of the deluge by the Department of Sociology
- Interactions with and research orientation for students and research scholars of various institutions called *Charcha* by the Department of History
- *There is no 'Other'* (Transgender Life and Society), a poster exhibition and film screening as well as *NavothanavumSthreeyum*, a photo exhibition on women of the Renaissance in Kerala by Centre for Comparative Literature
- Exhibition to create awareness on the activities and thereby help realise the importance of National Cadet Corps by the NCC unit in the University.
- Exhibition of ancient manuscripts and magazines conserved by the University under the organisation of Department of Vedanta
- Synaesthetic assessment by the Department of Psychology

4. *Limitations:*
- Limited options to exhibit directly useful research outputs are available with a University focusing on Arts and Humanities.
- Since the Department buildings spread within a small area, in a span of 2-3 Kilometres, there was overcrowding at the venues.
- Due to the absence of research in the regional campuses, it was difficult to conduct similar programmes in the regional campuses of the University

5. *Evidence of Success*
- Prominent personalities from various different walks of life like the President of KaladyGrama Panchayat and members, Senior Police Officers of the Police Station, teachers and administrative authorities of nearby schools and Colleges, office bearers of local residential associations and the general public attended the inaugural functions extending all their co-operation for the event making it evident that the event was appreciated by the public.
- Nearly two thousand people visited the campus in the two days event in 2017 and 2018. A detailed brochure was prepared with 1000 copies and a notice with 3000 copies were circulated to the Public, Panchayats, Municipalities, Schools, Colleges, etc. Hoardings stating the importance of *Shastrayan* programme and inviting the public to the event were erected at nearby places of the University. More than 250 students participated in the painting competition held on 20th February 2017.
- 27 elected members of local bodies participated in the two day *Gender Sensitisation* workshop.
- Certificates and prizes to winners of the painting competition and to the participants of the workshop were distributed at the closing ceremony.
- In 2018 students from outside the campus were part of a competition titled *Emerging Kalady, a Post-Flood imagination of New Kalady* in which a creative expression of post-flood Kalady was realised. Department of Geography conducted a mapping of flood-affected KaladyGrama Panchayat where the university is located and submitted it to the local governing body.
- Extempore, quiz, dumb charades, word power test and *anthakshari*competitions were held for the general public.
- In 2019 *Sasthrayan,* student volunteers from the university reached out to the public with pamphlets and announcement to invite the people within 20km around the campus, and the students in all the nearby educational institutions.
- Department of Sociology conducted an opinion poll *Vox Populi* to understand the public opinion regarding the environmental destruction that Kerala underwent during the flood.

6. *Problems Encountered and Resources Required*

- Sensitization about the need of conducting such an event by a University among both the academic community and public is a huge task.
- Month long hectic preparations are needed for just a two day event
- *Sasthrayan* 2019 had to challenge and overcome the drawbacks that had set in with the flood in 2018 in Kerala.
- Forging association with other organizations like Shastra Sahitya Parishad, Indian Space Research Organisation and others would both bring in more scientific fervour and shape the event with more quantitatively measurable and convincing elements.
- Outreach Programmes seems to be more significant and more strenuous in our specific context of being located in a village with people who are not aware of the importance of attending such programmes.

7. *Notes (Optional)*

Open House can be adopted by any University which decided to discuss their research with the common people. Such events may create a positive impression among public about the HEI. It also helps the aspirants to know about the programmes and events of the HEI.

Best Practices II

One week Induction Programme for Freshly Admitted Students

1. Objectives of the Practice

The orientation programme aimed at newcomers to help them get acquainted with distinguished academic practices, mission and vision of the university, campus life and Programmes offered, teaching and learning practices, its philosophy, structure, difficulties and positive aspects of Outcome Based Teaching Learning and Evaluation system, producing meaningful academic atmosphere though co-operative and creativeworks. Through the orientation programme envisioned to assist students to have a clearunderstanding about the university system, how it works, scope of their respective subjects, to develop positive attitude towards university, to get familiarise with theacademic uniqueness and practices in the Departments, equip students to develop strategiesfor achieving better learning outcomes. The thrust areas covered under the programme were aboutthe unique academic culture inside the campus, better exercise of freedom withresponsibilities, systematic preparation for classes including reading for courses, findingbooks in the library, searching online academic resources, and also various opportunitiesfor extra-curricular activities. The programme also provided guidance about systematic ways of preparing notes, writing assignments etc. Furthermore through this programme,the students were informed about the structure and time schedule of various programmes,academic integrity and plagiarism policy and other university policies.

2. The Context

Most of the students taking admissions in the university come from schools and collegeswhere the academic culture and practices are relatively different. Therefore it is essentialto provide a common platform for the newcomers in order to familiarise with the newenvironment of a university both at academic as well as personal levels. This orientationprogramme could be considered as an important intervention service to help studentsto acclimatise and make more successful transition to the university student life. Moreover,it is equally important to conduct various study Programmes at university level thatenhance student success and orientation programmes for newcomers have demonstratedas one of the highly effective method not only to reduce student attrition but also toimprove social interaction, networking, and morale.

3. The Practice

Programmes were organised at two levels, at Department level and at University level.With the support of the faculty members, programmes including lectures, trainings, PTAmeetings and interactive sessions on various topics were conducted for Under Graduate and Post Graduate students separately.

The following common programmes were organised for Under Graduate and Post Graduate students.

List of Sessions conducted during 5 days.

- VC, PVC and Registrar addressed the students during the inaugural function
- Ice-Breaking session conducted by professionals
- A session on 'Knowledge and University System' by Dr. Sunil P. Elayidom,Professor, Department of Malayalam
- A motivational talk by Dr. Arun Kumar (Associate Executive Editor, 24 NewsChannel)
- A session on 'Gender sensitivity as Academic Institutional practices' by Dr.Sheeba K. M, Professor, Department of History
- A session on 'Being Environment –friendly-Creating Academic Environment' by Dr.Sangamesan K.M, Associate Professor, Department of Sanskrit Sahitya
- A session on 'NAAC, IQAC and Students life in SSUS' by Dr. Saju T.S., DirectorIQAC &Dr. Yamuna K., NAAC Coordinator
- A session on 'Introducing the University – Programme Structure and theAcademic, Library,Grievance Cell, Anti-Ragging Cell, Mentoring System,Scholarships, ASAP, Online Attendance System' by Dr.Biju Vincent.
- Sessions on 'Student life in SSUS – Privileges, Rights, Responsibilities, Redressalmechanisms, mentoring, students counselling ,etc. by Director of StudentsServices
- Sharing of experiences of life @ SSUS – Anjuna, Dinu, Aneswar (studentrepresentatives)
- Cultural Programmes
- Departments organised separate orientation programme to introduce thesystem of teaching and learning at the University.
- Library orientation also given to all students.

4. Limitations

- The new students are reluctant to engage in the programme as it was conductingin the second week of the admission and they were new to the idea.
- Involvement of senior students are important to familiarise the campus, butthis was not as forthcoming as expected
- The campus does not have a very good auditorium to seat the entire capacity of students
- All regional campuses have not successfully conducting the programme

5. Evidence of Success

- Nearly seventy five percent of students actively participated in the 5 dayorientation programme.
- ☐ The feedback from students who attended the programme revealed that thesessions were informative as   well as useful.
- A positive and healthy attitude towards the university system, activities and Departments was created.
- A high level of commitment towards educational as well as personal goals wasobserved among students.
- A healthy trans-disciplinary approach was developed among students.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- The admission procedure was continuing at the time of orientation process.Hence those who took admission afterwards found it unable to participate in theorientation.
- More faculty members from other reputed institutions may be invited to give classes ontopics relevant to Higher Education sector.
- Participation of parents and providing them an orientation on general topics related tostudent life, university academics and procedures is necessary.
- *Notes*
- Student's induction programme series may be adopted by other educationalinstitutions as a regular method/practice to induct students to new educationalsystem and help them to have a

- smooth transition into the next step of academic life.