



Internal Quality Assurance Cell

St. Thomas College Kozhencherry

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1. Introduction
2. Practices: Women Empowerment through Constructive Social Engagement.

Objective: Bringing Girl Child to the Mainstream

- I. Context
- II. Objectives of the practice
- III. The Practice
- IV. Obstacles faced
- V. Impact of the Practice
- VI. Resources Required

2.8 Caring for Senior Citizens

The context

With the advancement in the medical science today, the life expectancy has been increasing resulting in the phenomenon of ‘population ageing’. This significant rise in the number of senior citizens and their proper health care and privileges for them are matters of great concern and challenge before us and especially before higher education institutions which can orient common people towards this noble task.

Objectives of the practice

- To awaken the sense of responsibility amongst students towards their parents and grandparents;
- To help the senior citizens residing in near-by old-age homes; and
- To understand the psychology of the aged and help them lessen their pain and emotional stress.

The practice

The teachers and the students of the various organs of the college like NSS, NCC and Clubs of the college visit old-age home situated at Guru Teg Bahadur Colony, Batala to enquire about their requirements, problems and facilities. The students are grouped and trained to take initiative and solve their specific problems like basic needs, medical needs and emotional needs. Students are asked to write about their experiences of the visit to old-age home and take pledge to be sensitive to the needs of the old in their family and surroundings. The students of the college make donations to “Helpage India”, an organization working for the cause and care of the elderly in India for the last nearly three decades and associate with its activities. The emphasis is not just on donating money but reviving the age-old cultural values of India that regard the old as an asset and not a burden and give them the much-needed company and feeling of belongingness. The college also conducts workshop on ‘Importance of balanced diet for various age groups’, with special emphasis on the problems of old age and the ways to minimize them through diet-management.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

There are always financial constraints. These are sought to be overcome with the help of various clubs and societies of the city.

Impact of the practice

In the present-day society, the emotional bond between parents and the children seems weakening for various reasons, giving way to individualism among children. While for youngsters, their perception of home as a cherished place to go back to has been shattered before their very eyes, for the old, indifference by family members has assumed menacing proportions. In this context, this practice has certainly made an impact. It has extended a helping hand to the aged citizens of the local and surrounding areas, and has also infused a sense of responsibility and respect amongst the students towards the aged people. The HEIs can awaken the students to realize their responsibility towards the senior citizens.

Resources required

Finance is the crucial resource.

Contact person for further details

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2.6 Rehabilitation of Women Prisoners

The context Inaccessibility, unaccountability and public indifference are most conducive to violation of human rights of prisoners as well as prison officials. The Central Jail being just next door, the college got involved in the rehabilitation of prisoners. This was intended to bridge the missing link between higher education and the community and help students to acquire an understanding of crime and punishment.

Objectives of the practice

- To study the criminal justice system;
- To make students empathetic towards offenders, particularly women;
- To protect the human rights of women prisoners;
- To learn the best practices in other prisons, initially in India; and
- To suggest changes in the Prison Act of 1894, which is more than a century old and has a colonial bias.

The practice

Weekly visits – Initially, the college students visited the jail on a weekly basis and engaged in imparting literacy and moral education to the prisoners. The visits helped build rapport with prisoners and added to their sense of self-worth; also, the activity added to the sense of accountability of the prison officials. For students, it led to an awareness of the loopholes in the criminal justice system. On realizing the sordid plight of women prisoners, the college began focusing on their rehabilitation.

Legal intervention– Ninety-ninepercent of women prisoners are from rural background. In association with lawyers, the college offers legal knowledge and intervention for petty offenders who would otherwise languish in prison.

Cultural programmes – Students are trained to stage cultural programmes. These provide entertainment and moral education to the inmates. The students are exposed to ground realities in prisons.

Counselling – The college offers counseling to women inmates. Rural women are homemakers and are deeply rooted in their home and hearth. Any displacement for whatever reason causes them untold

misery and distress, often altering their course of life irreversibly for the worse. Individual, attentive and unbiased listening to each one gives them a new lease of life.

Occupational therapy – Music reduces stress levels. The women inmates and constables are trained in playing the harmonium and singing bhajans. Prayer becomes for women prisoners a rich soothing experience rather than a mere ritual.

Paper-bag making project - Students of the college procure newspapers, the raw material needed for bag-making, and market the products themselves; the proceeds from the sale of these articles are given to prisoners for purchase of their toilet items. The practice has also had other salutary lateral consequences.

Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them

Visits by outsiders to the jail are a threat to corrupt prison officials and are strongly discouraged. Thus, permission for visits are not easy to get. However, firm commitment by the college got due recognition by the favorably-inclined prison officials.

Impact of the practice

The practice has, to a great extent, bridged the gap between pure academics and community engagement. The students have developed a spirit of social service and commitment to the community, specially the imprisoned. The teacher looking after this practice was invited by the Director of the Mulla Committee for Prison Reform to be part of a 3 member team to make a study of 'Custodial institutions for women in the state of Madhya Pradesh' and offer recommendations to the National Council for Women. The report was sent to the Chairperson, NCW in April 2005 and is available at www.humanrightsinitiative.org.

Resources required

Resources like newspapers, glue etc. are raised from the local community from time to time with no difficulty. Motivated students spread the awareness among the student community and outside as well.

Contact Person for further details

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