

BEST PRACTICE - I

1. Title of the Practice

“Aksharadeepam” (The Lamp of Letters)

2. Objectives of the Practice

- To provide assistance to tribal school students of Dr. B R Ambedkar Vidyaniketan School who need special care and support to enhance their academic scores.
- To enable the students to be ready to enter higher studies. As many students come from educationally and financially challenged strata of the society, they require outside help to excel in studies.
- To upgrade the linguistic skills of the students.
- To train the volunteers to empathize with the students with disabilities and instill in them a helping mentality to reach out to those in need.

3. The Context

As the tribal students come from socially and economically challenged communities, it was necessary to create awareness in them on the need to get a good education to improve their present condition. While discussing with their teachers, it was found that the lower class students needed guidance in languages and the higher class students in science subjects. Accordingly classes were planned for the students based on their strengths and weaknesses. Volunteers from among academically top college students were selected in order to spend time with the needy students to instill in them a desire to learn to better their standards of living through education. It was a challenge to make the lower class students participate in language activities to improve their communicative skills. This was overcome by careful planning and implementation of required activities including games to sustain the interest of the students.

4. The Practice

It has come to our notice through observation that the tribal students needed additional support to excel in studies. Most of them do not enter the higher portals of education. To prevent this and instill in them confidence to compete in the outside world, they required some additional support. Academically top students from our College were briefed about the existing educational level of the students who needed their support. They took turns once a

week to engage the classes after the regular academic sessions. This coaching programme regularly monitored the progress of the students. They were evaluated by the resource persons. Improving academic skills, raising the level of comprehension of basic subjects and linguistic proficiency of the students were given prior attention. Motivation classes and counselling sessions were conducted with the consent of the school authorities which broadened the vision of the students. The college students also benefitted from the programme. They learned valuable lessons of nurturing the socially challenged through their efforts to regularly engage with the school students.

5. Evidence of Success

The support classes taken by the college students have started showing results. The academic levels of the school students show a positive trend. This is evident from the results of their regular exams. The teachers of the school have identified this upward trend in their progress. The lower class students are communicating better in their classes. They are gradually getting over the language barrier thereby becoming active participants in their classrooms. The target has been achieved in the first year of this practice. The favorable outcome during the current year indicates the success of this venture. It gives us impetus to continue the same in years to come.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Initially it was difficult to convince the parents and students about the need for special support for the students. The students of the lower classes are introvert by nature and this posed some difficulty especially in the initial stages. Lack of motivation also came up as a hindrance to the proper functioning of the venture in the early stages. But these difficulties were overcome with proper counselling. Volunteers from among the tribes were also included in the programme. When they tried to reach out to students, they were quite responsive. They also gained confidence that in future they can get ahead through proper education. The venture heavily depended on human capital. Volunteers were chosen from college students, especially academically bright ones to take sessions after class hours. The authorities of Dr. B R Ambedkar Vidyaniketan School extended their active support and the use of their infrastructure.

7. Notes (Optional)

This practice of supporting neighbourhood schools can be taken up by colleges. Since the volunteers are college students, the school students form good rapport with them. The purpose is served and learning without inhibitions happen which is advantageous to students from socially and economically backward backgrounds. The volunteers in turn broaden their vision through socially useful productive tasks and they learn to empathize with the needy.

BEST PRACTICE II

1. Title of the Practice:

“Lab to Land”

Distribution of Tissue Cultured Banana Saplings to a Tribal Settlement

2. Objectives of the Practice:

- To get hands on experience on classroom learning for the students of our college.
- To provide assistance to the marginalized tribal community of Kattiilakuzhy settlement.
- To give them a means of livelihood by cultivating and selling good quality red variety of bananas.
- To provide nutritious fruit supplement to combat anemia as the red variety bananas are rich in micro nutrients.

3. The Context:

The MSc Botany students of our college with the help of the faculty get firsthand knowledge of the procedures involved in plant propagation through tissue culture. The tissue culture lab of the college provides excellent platform for the creation of high quality saplings to be distributed among the needy in the surrounding community. Peringammala Panchayat, where the college is located, has 19 tribal settlements. The tribal community of Kanikkars is a closed community which does not desire outside interference. The literacy rate is poor among them as commuting to educational institutions is difficult for them. They mostly depend on the forest produce as means of their livelihood. Cultivation is also done on small scale. Health issues are plenty among them due to deficiency in nutrients. These challenges need to be overcome to help the vulnerable community to lead normal lives.

4. The Practice:

The idea of transferring technology from an institution to benefit the tribal community is novel in many ways. The students apply their theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom in the tissue culture lab to produce high yield variety of banana saplings. This is distributed to the tribal settlement by the student volunteers themselves. They also monitor the progress of the saplings planted and give adequate advice as and when needed. The tribal people of Kattilakuzhi settlement were selected for the project this year. The support given by the

students to the community is tremendous. The enthusiasm of the students has helped initiate interest in the Kanikkars to try banana cultivation. This has helped the closed community more open to the ideas of the outside world. The biggest challenge was to convince the tribal people to try out tissue culture saplings.

5. Evidence of Success:

Visits by the students to the area under cultivation has revealed good yield of bananas. It has helped the Kanikkars gain a source of livelihood. They sell their produce in the local markets. Furthermore, they use some for consumption. It has helped the children gain additional nutrients for their growth. It has also helped keep starvation at bay. The community has gained confidence to cultivate saplings produced through tissue culture. They are more open to support from the students which is a sign of acceptance of the outside world. Dependence on cultivation has also helped the people spend their time fruitfully. The overall mental wellbeing is also fostered through such a project. The students are also optimistic about sustaining the project in the following years.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

The primary difficulty was to convince the people to try out scientific way of agriculture through the use of high yield varieties of banana saplings. The students with the help of faculty were able to get over it through constant interactions. Once they agreed to cultivate the tissue cultured bananas, the next challenge arose in the form of sustained interest. Frequent visits were needed to make sure the watering and applying manures of the saplings were done at adequate times. The students also had to devote time outside their college hours to visit the remote place. This was mostly done on holidays. Once the yield was reached, the students helped the people transport their produce to the local markets. Some yields were retained for consumption in the settlement so that children and women could ward off anemia and ill health due to lack of nutritious food.

7. Notes:

Colleges with full-fledged Botany departments can set up tissue culture labs which in turn can be used to develop high yielding varieties of saplings. The socially and economically backward communities can be selected to distribute the saplings. The help of NSS or similar organizations can be taken to help track the progress of the cultivation.
