

St.Stephen's College Uzhavoor

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7.2 – Best Practice 2018-19

Best Practice 1

Title of the practice : To Nurture the Nature

The Centre for Environmental Education and Rural Development (CEERD) was established in St. Stephen's College, Uzhavoor, in 2001 to promote sustainable development in the local villages through extension programmes.

Objectives of the Practice:

- To develop environment-conscious citizens who are socially responsible and culturally aware of environmental issues.
- To transform Uzhavoor Panchayath and neighbouring areas into self-sufficient areas through sustainable development.
- To promote eco-farming practices by using organic manure, organic pesticides, etc., and implementing proper waste disposal techniques.
- To conduct short term courses for students, teachers and the local public to enrich the environmental and agricultural areas through organic gaming / promote eco-friendly environment and practices.
- To function as a resource centre for environment, biodiversity and various socio-cultural aspects.
- To promote research projects on local environmental issues and suggest remedial measures.
- The local administration, governmental bodies, NGOs, banks, and the local community mutually beneficial to link the college with all educational institutions in the area.

The Context:

Uzhavoor is an ecologically blessed area where the college is situated. However, there has been a misuse of ecological resources and hence, a rising need to create awareness about eco-friendly practices.

One of the significant problems affected by the village is the scarcity of drinking water. The natural water resources cannot meet the region's demand which has further aggravated due to

poor water management resources. Water has been contaminated by overloading and malfunctioning septic systems, solid waste disposal, plastic dumping, and pesticides, herbicides, and improper management of fertilizer and manure in agriculture.

Added to these, the cost-benefit balance in agriculture has made the agriculture sector less attractive. Environmental Education is the need of the hour. The academic community of St. Stephen's strives to be aware of and interact with society to make the education system relevant and meaningful. There is a need to understand what constitutes sustainability in the environment, explore all the problems related to the environment, and engage in wise ways of preserving it.

The practice of CEERD mainly aims at students' awareness and activities on eco-friendly practices and environmental issues.

The Practice

The Centre for Environmental Education and Rural Development (CEERD) was established in St. Stephen's College Uzhavoor in 2001 to promote extension programmes of the college ultimately aiming at the theall round development of the region. Moreover its uniqueness lies in its organization of programmes which uphold social responsibility as well as environment consciousness for both students and community. It is an arena to practice the value – 'Love Nature and Save Nature'.

- One of its significant initiatives includes **Paristhithi Mithra**, an award instituted by the CEERD in 2009.
- As the initiative received great support and appreciation, it was extended to bestow two awards in recognition of the outstanding contribution of individuals, social service organizations, clubs and educational institutions towards the promotion of environmental education, protection, conservation, preservation and sustainable development in the State of Kerala.
- The awards are presented every year in observance of the World Environment Day.
- Each award consists of Certificate, CEERD Trophy and a cash prize of Rs. 15000/-. Applications for the award of Paristhithi Mithra Award are called for by the office of the Executive Director, CEERD, St. Stephen's College, Uzhavoor on or before 15

April of every year along with a detailed report of the environmental activities undertaken by the organization during the previous calendar year. The winner will be adjudicated by a panel of environmental experts whose decision will be final.

- In addition to this, the unit also arranges various activities and competitions an association-wise **Grow-bag cultivation competition**. Other activities associated with World Environment Day, include plantation of saplings in the campus & distribution of the same to plant in houses.
- **Environment Education Trips** organized to make students more eco-sensitive and freegan in 2016-17.
- Introduction of a Certificate course in '**Environment and Sustainable Development –Training & Practises**' in association with Kottayam Social Service Society (KSS) which aims to upgrade student's knowledge and awareness of the environment.
- CEERD has also organised **Seminars** and **Workshops** to encourage students and teachers to be environmentally sound and responsible citizens. These include:
 - *Seminar on Sustainable Development* by Dr. MG Sanilkumar, S.N. College Maliankara;
 - *Seminar on Waste Management* by Sri. Thomas KC;
 - *Workshop on Mushroom Cultivation* by Dr. Sincy Joseph;
 - *Seminar on Climate Change* by Dr. Pratheesh C. Mamman, from ICC, Kottayam.
- The **World Food Day** was observed on 16th October 2018, which further amplifies how imbalance in the environment and its resources results in hunger, obesity, food loss and waste; and affects the world as a whole. Food stalls were set up with the sale of traditional food items to promote healthy eating.
- **Energy conservation campaigns** were also undertaken and training was given in the making of paper-bag, paper-pen and cloth mat.
- **Field visit arranged like the visit to KSS, Chaithanya**, which included sessions on green audit, organic farming, soap & detergent preparation, animal husbandry, biocompost preparation were held.
- Supervises the maintenance of the vermi-compost unit in the campus.

Evidence of Success

- The Centre for Environmental Education and Rural Development (CEERD) has carried out extension activities with the involvement of the various departments.
- To widen learning experience, field visits were arranged for students
 - to a home grown nursery of exotic fruits at Kanjirappally
 - to Malnadu Diary farm at Kanjirappilly
 - to Nutmeg Plantation
 - to Nursery at Kinatti environment.
- In association with the World Environment Day, tree saplings were distributed for planting in the campus & in the houses. Students are encouraged towards micro-farming and also to clean the campus and classrooms

The overwhelming response of the coveted *Paristhithi Mithra Award* obliged the institution to raise the sponsorship amount and ensure appreciation of the best environmentalist in three categories such as individuals, educational institutions and social service societies, along with individual prizes for association wise Grow- bag cultivation competition.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- The full success of such a venture requires hands-on experiential environmental education which can heighten awareness and effective action.
- A major constraint and problem encountered was the lack of integration of indigenous knowledge in the teaching of environmental education
- The constraint of time due to a packed syllabus prevents full swing effective activity participation and hinders activities like field trips etc

BEST PRACTICE 2:

Title of the Practice : Battle for a Health Literate Society: Health Infonet

Objectives of the Practice

The institution implemented the practice in order to ensure healthy lives towards the creation of a healthy community and sustainable future. The major objectives of this health mission are as follows:

- To inculcate ethical responsibility, philanthropism and humanitarian attitude among the students by initiating them into community service
- Transform academic libraries into health literacy dissemination centres for the public
- To fight against medical misinformation and health hoaxes by providing awareness about the same
- To prevent manipulation and end confusion on health-related matters
- To promote health equity among the community
- To create a health literate society through the collaboration of institutional and healthcare experts.

The Context

In this world, where health is a major concern, health literacy tends to be essential for a healthy well-being. Hence, today the priority is for a collective and continuous effort to create a health literate society. Health Infonet, a novel academic initiative, is the result of the combined efforts of St. Stephen's College, Uzhavoor and the Mahatma Gandhi University. It connects the libraries of various institutions, thereby disseminating health literacy education to students and faculty of the participating institutions through dedicated online channels.

This practice is unique and distinctive in the context of higher education in India as it ensures student involvement in a community participation to improve the quality of life. The students, in the course of their education, are thus made aware of community issues and health challenges prevalent in society. This helps to mould a health conscious generation and inculcate in them healthcare ethics, moral responsibility and a philanthropic spirit.

The Practice

Health Infonet is a not-for-profit initiative projected as an institutional effort of St.Stephen's College, Uzahvoor and Mahatma Gandhi University under the co-ordination of Dr.Biju Thomas, Syndicate Member, who serves as the academic co-ordinator of Health Infonet Health Literacy Initiative.

It is a platform for collaboration of institutional and health care experts' aiming at the dissemination of health literacy. It provides its services through the health infonet web portal (<https://healthinfonet.in>).

The practice helps create an awareness in the students and the faculty regarding different health issues and the methods to adopt to experience better health and well-being. They thus become harbingers of a health care revolution.

➤ Health Infonet Literacy Initiatives include:

- Health Literacy Social Network
An Academic Health Social Network Platform is created for collaboration and learning on health-related aspects, using the premium version of workplace App of Face book.
- Health Literacy E-learning
This online e-learning platform imparts basic health literacy education to the academic community and the public.
- Facilitates talk with a Health care Expert
- National Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Webinar Series
- Health Literacy E-Learning Portal which connecting academic institutions and libraries

Mode of Working

- NIPMR in collaboration with Health infonet will uploadin the portal videos and presentations of NIPMR's professional's on various areas of disability. This information is freely accessible for anyone who is interested in this topic.

- The platform allows the viewers to ask/raise their queries, doubts and suggestions through the comment box available in the portal. The respective professional will also answer their queries through the portal. This will prove useful for future viewers as well.
- A health literacy social network will be created using a premium version of Facebook Workplace App so that all the respective stakeholders can connect with each other in real time.
- In addition to the above mentioned, plans are on to set a toll-free number as a gateway to the helpdesk. Disabled persons or caregivers can use this number to clarify their doubts. The social workers at NIPMR will call back to the respective numbers. After the primary conversation with the social worker, he / she will connect the call to the concerned professional or doctor in NIPMR. Doctors or professionals would give proper guidance to their problem. If situation demands the assistance of any other service, other than NIPMR's capacity, a professional/ doctor will refer the person to the proper place according to their need.

Evidence of Success

- Health Infonet received the appreciation of Smt. K. K. Shailaja , Kerala Health Minister
- Selected as one of the eight best projects under the *One MP-One Idea* programme of Kottayam District
- Health care is just a single click away for over 13000 registered members.
- MOUs with MGU,NIPMR and IUCDS and currently collaborating with 3 universities and more than 50 Educational and health care organisations for the dissemination of basic health literacy through its dedicated E-learning portal and other channels.
- Health Infonet has been an active academic collaborator with National Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (NIPMR) in the conduct of a webinar series on disability-related issues. Almost 10 webinars and 3-panel discussions have already been conducted with more in schedule.
- Resource Available :The entire professional services available in NIPMR- the service of Medical Doctors, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Developmental Therapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Special Education Teachers and the resources available in the NIPMR Library.
- In collaboration with NIPMR, Health Infonet has established a health literacy Initiative, *Call and Connect*-. This is a State level disability health information gateway which also aims at the development of various other health literacy resource

online modules like Covid-19 updates, First Aid Basics, etc. The disability information gateway intends to link the libraries of various Institutions (Universities, Colleges, Schools, etc) so to create a model Kerala disability information Institutional network. The Inter-University Centre for Disability Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University is supporting proposed Kerala Disability Health Information Gateway by NIPMR and Health Infonet.

Challenges

The programme encountered the following challenges in its implementation:

- Lack of funds: Being a non-profit initiative, Health Infonet faces difficulty in fund mobilisation.
- Regular updated follow-up : Another major challenge encountered was the need for a full time motivated team of counsellors and health officials who can follow up on the feedback regularly and organise sessions accordingly.

Increased participation: The need for participation of more renowned agencies and institutions would facilitate better service, which in turn would help in increasing the number of beneficiaries.