Practice – I

Title of the Practice

"Development of Communication Skills"

Objectives of the Practice

Most of the students coming to our college are coming from rural background where medium of instruction is Hindi. Again, with deteriorating standard of teaching at the secondary level, the students have a very poor communication skill and find it very difficult to accommodate in the academic programme of the college at the initial stage. As such, it was felt that their communication skills be enhanced in the very beginning, so that they get adjusted in the college academic environment and be better equipped to face the open competitive world in future.

The Context

The challenging issue in designing this practice was the apathy of the teachers on one hand and stiff resistance from a section of students, who keep on seeking causes for leading agitations and one of their easiest plank for opposition is to oppose any extra fee that is charged from the students. To make the programme compulsory for the students was a challenge in itself. Apathy of the teachers was because of their too much emphasis on teaching regular course contents only, for which the regular time-table seems to be tight enough to leave no room for skill enhancement courses. Then, arranging classes for around 800 students annually was a challenge in itself.

The Practice

In general, lots of emphasis is laid on teaching the specific subject throughout the academic program and no emphasis is laid on development of communication skill of the student. An individual takes recourse to many types of communication like verbal and non-verbal communication. In non-verbal communication there are various types of communication involved. Then now-a-days, apart from communication skills, soft skills are also important and personality development is another very important aspect. In USA, where 4 year degree programmes are in vogue, much emphasis is laid on development of communication skills and it is understood that good communication is essential to develop better human networks, without which, it is difficult to succeed in the present day society.

Already, the importance of communication skills came to the fore with the development of service sector in the country and growth of software companies and call-centers. Many institutions sprang-up in the private sector, but the regular educational institutions were very slow in responding to this need of their students. Our College was the first college to take up the challenge of introducing the course as a compulsory add-on course.

Evidence of Success

This programme proved to be an instant success, as students thronged in large numbers to get registered in this course. It is not that the course was designed to teach them English, which they had already studied in their secondary classes. In fact, their knowledge was to be brought out in open by practice and by instilling confidence in them and by giving them an opportunity to overcome that sense of guilt in case they erred in public. Once they started reciting in groups, holding hands and enacting plays, soon they developed confidence and started performing well in classes also. Their drop-out rate in first year also reduced. As the programme was regularly monitored, student feedback has been very encouraging in favour of this programme.

Nearly all the colleges of Allahabad tried to introduce this course in their units with limited success and could not gather strength to make it compulsory. Ewing Christian College is the only college of Allahabad which has been able to address this big problem faced by deprived students in general, by arranging successful organization of this skill development programme for its students without any external help and is sustaining it as an essential component of the college academic programme.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Problems encountered in introduction of this programme were as follows:
Lack of qualified staff
Lack of infrastructure
Lack of funds
These problems were overcome in the following manner.

- Lack of qualified staff: With an aim to run this programme on a professional basis, one person already established in the city as the best teacher of spoken English was engaged by the college as the director of the programme and was given free hand to develop the programme. He enrolled 30 prospective candidates to be groomed as teachers and they were given intensive training for a month, after which the best 8 were recruited as language teachers. This initial effort proved to be very effective.
- An abandoned building of the college previously used as staff residences was renovated and prepared to house Center for Languages, where the programme could be run from 8 am to 5 pm. The entire infrastructure was developed along with Language Lab with ten work-stations.
- Programme was made compulsory, with a nominal fee of Rs. 600 initially, while the market was offering the same course for Rs. 2000. In fact, the real challenge was to make it compulsory at the college level, which could have invited stiff resistance from the student community, had it, and failed to deliver. Fortunately, the professional approach paid and the programme proved to be a success.

Practice – II

Title of the Practice

"Making all the students computer aware compulsorily"

Objectives of the Practice

We are observing a very big change in the way information is being made available for sharing and dissemination. Thus to get digital information is an essential activities of the human life. The objective behind adopting this as a practice was to make our students coming from poor background and mostly on the wrong side of the digital divide - whether from Maths stream, or Biology stream or Arts stream, including pupil teachers of B. Ed. Programme – overcome this digital divide by becoming computer literate, so that they may be equipped to adopt the habit of becoming seekers of knowledge and become self- learners.

The Context

Presence of world wide resource of information and knowledge through World Wide Web(www) cannot be ignored. To access digital data, knowledge of computers is a must, and that is why computer literacy was identified as a necessary academic achievement to make our students better prepared for accommodating in the fast emerging and all-pervading digital world.

To introduce the programme as a compulsory component of educational programme was a big challenge, because of the sheer big number to be covered under this scheme. The target group was Part III students, and their number was around 600. Then, it was difficult again to economize on fee front, as this programme was capital intensive. Another problem was to design the programme in such a way that it is just sufficient to initiate the student in the use of the relevant technology in a limited time frame, and then leaving the students hungry to satisfy their curiosity on their own.

The Practice

Though the need and necessity of computer literacy was soon identified, the regular institutions engaged in higher learning were very slow in their response, again leaving the job for private operators, who fleeced the students with an aim to earn profits and charged exorbitant fee, which was beyond reach of majority of students. As such, the issue that was to be addressed was to enhance quality of educational programme through imparting computer literacy without losing sight of equity and access. Adopting this programme as a practice by making it compulsory at degree level was the unique feature of this practice and it was being done for the first time by any college in the region.

Evidence of Success

Imparting of this skill of computer literacy opened up a new world for all the students to access and acquire information and knowledge. One of the first signs was the way they presented lectures arranged on various topics by different departments. At least one department was fair enough to acknowledge that the students were able to speak on some of the topics in much better way as compared to the teachers. Naturally, an avenue was opened up to acquire knowledge from alternative sources other than classroom teaching.

Another sign of success was the ease with which information was being shared by final year students searching for options after graduation. Ease in handling the computer and using

internet for search, students are able to acquire information about various options and get registered in the entrance level exams in time. This has resulted in a fairly good number of students securing admission in prestigious institutions like IITs, IIMs, DU, JNU, BHU and other institutions of higher learning of repute.

Some of the pass-out graduates have shared that this imparted skill of computers placed them in a better position as compared to other students, as they could work in a better way on research projects and other assignments and were proud to be students of ECC, which was a well identified and much respected name in the higher education echelons.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Constraints and limitations, as enumerated above, were addressed in a planned manner. The infrastructural constraint was overcome by constructing a new floor in the Physics Department building, which was equipped to have 150 computers spread over three labs. Then the certificate course was designed in a compact module divided into units, with every lecture followed by lab work and practice. For making the programme more effective, courseware with practicals was prepared by the faculty and published in a book form, to be given to each student at the time of induction. The programme was launched by charging a very small amount of fee, which was Rs. 300 initially. By optimizing use of the available infrastructure, the infrastructure and space available for students of Degree programme of Computer Application and PGDCA was utilized for all the Part III students of the college and the programme became an instant success and a unique feature of our college. It can be proudly said, that all the graduates of our college move out as computer literate and are on the right side of the digital divide. College has set an example before the other institution of Allahabad.