



GATES INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

(Managed by G. Raghunatha Reddy Educational Trust)
(Permanently Affiliated to JNTUA, Anantapur & Approved by AICTE, New Delhi)
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Dr. D. Venkatesh

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Principal

Best Practice – 1

Addressing Fear Factor, Improving Self-Confidence and Developing All-Rounders

1. Objectives

The main objective of this best practice is to improve self-confidence and address fear-factor that is a show-stopper for the students of Gates Institute of Technology, Gooty in achieving their career goals. The students with a rural background are performing exceedingly well in academic exams. However, due to their rural backgrounds and lack of confidence, they are unable to perform well in job interviews. The intention of this best practice is to come up with a non-traditional approach to address the low self-esteem of the students. Traditional soft-skill development programs did not result in the desired results. The objective is to find a non-traditional approach to address the issues and observe its impact.

2. Context

The students of this Institution are well known for their academic excellence but surprisingly performed poorly in placement drives. After making careful observations and looking at the statistics, it was observed that students with distinction and even university rank holders were unable to perform well in campus placement drives. The management organized several brain-storming sessions with stakeholders such as Students, Faculty members, HoDs, Human Resource Managers, and Alumni to identify the root cause and provide a solution. It was observed that meritorious students are unable to express and communicate due to a lack of self-confidence and fear-factor.

After further observation by visiting students' houses and spending time with their parents/families, we have noticed that students in these rural areas were lacking in self-confidence due to several reasons. This has become an issue for many students impacting their communication skills and career opportunities. In addition, one more factor affecting the students, according to our analysis is their total involvement in the present day's digital, virtual and meta world, thereby mentally isolating them from physical networking with their peer groups.


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3. Practices

A general solution to address the lack of soft skills among the students is to give them a few weeks of soft-skill training comprising verbal training and group discussions. This traditional approach did not give desired results for these students from rural backgrounds. After several months of deliberation, we came up with a multi-faceted approach to address low self-confidence and fear-factor of the students.

3.1 Campus Radio

When Covid-19 pandemic struck in an isolated world, with no other alternatives, we have explored a new concept called Campus Radio. The Institution signed an MoU with a specialist company **Younify** to launch a digital radio platform. Campus Radio provides students to express themselves freely on any topic of their interest in any language. Our aim is to offer the students complete freedom in respect of content or language thereby achieving the objective of overcoming their fear and improving their self-confidence. The Campus Radio started with 5 minutes programmes and gradually increased to 30 minutes programmes. We encouraged beginners to start with 5 minutes programmes and advanced users with 30 minutes programmes. Students formed teams with Management, Faculty members, Content writers, Graphic designers, Schedulers, Organizers and Radio Jockeys while producing original programmes on the Campus Radio. This resulted in a great success and the most talked about topic of the Institution. While we are able to achieve better communication skills among the students, we also came across several successful by-products such as physical networking, team spirit, collaborative efforts, and time-bound completion of tasks. An overall improvement in self-esteem was apparently visible among the students. In addition, they were able to overcome their fear of public speaking to a great extent.

3.2 MCs (Master of Ceremonies)

In order to move students from their Campus Radio recording rooms to public platforms, the Institution has decided that all the events henceforth should only be organized by the students. The Institution ensures students' participation end-to-end


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such as planning the event, preparing flyers, decorating stage, fixing up public address systems, and conducting the function/event as Master of Ceremonies(MCs). Students conduct all the events in the Institution as MCs. This move has provided exposure and platform for a large number of students to speak confidently in open forums. Transformation of students in overcoming their fear-factor and developing communication skills could be obviously witnessed in these events.

3.3 Technical Paper Presentations

The Institution provided project expositions and paper presentations within the Departments encompassing the entire sets of students. These platforms provided students to come out of their fear and explain their technical know-how to their peer groups and faculty members. When the projects have been fabricated hands-on by the students, they were able to express and explain with a high degree of confidence and conviction. Organizing more and more such paper presentations and project expositions helped students to explore and express themselves freely which helped them a lot in facing technical interviews more confidently.

3.4 Other Activities

In order to keep the students engaged with creativity and interest, the Institution frequently conducted programs such as “Two Minutes without Vocal Garbage”, “Tell me about Yourself”, “Tech- Treasure Hunts” etc. All these programs are organized by the students themselves, from start-to-end with an emphasis to gain self-confidence and enhance their power of expression. What we have noticed in organizing these small events is, success in small steps adds up greatly in developing self-confidence and increase morale of the students.

4. Evidence of Success

Campus radio is a notable success at GATES Institute of Technology with 400+ shows year after year, creating a vibrant student community. Besides improving self-confidence and overcoming fear-factor, students started exploring their inner potential. They were able to identify their inner strengths, experienced the power of teamwork, fun learning, organizing and at the same time, learning life-skills. Without Campus radio, we would not have realized that we have such good Content writers, Radio Jockeys, Graphic designers, Technical schedulers, Poets,


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etc. Out of all these activities, we have seen tremendous improvements in the leadership skills of the students.

The Institution has witnessed a stupendous success in placements this year in MNCs, for which most of the students attribute to their active role in Campus Radio. Many of the students have turned into freelance Graphic designers to exploit their artistic talents and blog writers to explore their creative writing skills. More importantly, many of the students are turning into entrepreneurs. All these transformations are going to be of tremendous use to the communities from where they originate and belong.

We're proud to see such a huge transition among these rural students to overcome their inner fear and become self-confident. The transformation is a phenomenal success.

Link to Testimony of success: Insta Page

https://www.instagram.com/younify_gates_campus_radio/?hl=en

5. Problems Encountered

Every successful journey has its own hurdles and failures. The biggest hurdle we faced was understanding the root cause of the issue. It took us some time in understanding the family backgrounds, poverty, rural atmosphere, poor infrastructure and their upbringing etc. It is very satisfying to note that we could come up with an out-of-the-box idea to address the issue. A major challenge is in convincing members to be a part of this idea. Convincing the stakeholders that this will result in great success took a considerable amount of time and effort. Parents thought their wards are wasting their time, instead of studying for exams.

Another biggest challenge is to keep the students engaged. Unfortunately in the current digitally connected world, students get distracted very easily, and bringing them back on track is an issue. We've overcome this by organizing mini-events, success parties, competitions, incentives and creating memories that are long-lasting.

Leadership plays a vital role. The role of CEO who manages the campus radio is very critical. Some CEOs have demonstrated exceptional performance in organizing the events. Some CEOs are slow, which results in a lot of involvement from the faculty coordinator.


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With a cramped curriculum schedule, it is hard to find time to engage students in these activities. This can be overcome by setting priorities and allocating time accordingly.

6. Summary

By successfully implementing this best practice, the Institution conveyed to the students that they should overcome their weak points with the available technology and resources. They have to take lead and give their 100% in whatever activity they are involved in and their weakness should not be a limiting factor for their performance in studies and extracurricular activities. The message conveyed is to build on their strengths and be self-confident. The success will follow automatically.

Best Practice – 2

Backlog Reduction Program

Objectives

The objective of this best practice is to assist slow learners and students having challenges with certain types of subjects. The backlog reduction program identifies, analyzes, and provides assistance to students to clear their backlogs so that students reduce their backlogs and stay on their career paths. The main outcome of this program is to provide a second chance to the students by removing obstacles in clearing the subjects they have challenges with. This will reduce drop-outs and provide greater career opportunities to the students. The program also improves the profile of the students.

Context

Even though the institution takes all the measures to address slow learners, with the limited number of days and the limited number of hours to complete a subject, may not be good enough for students to clear the exam resulting in backlogs. Backlogs are like water dripping drop by drop. If it is not addressed in time, it may result in a puddle of backlogs that will be difficult to deal with at a later stage. Backlogs also impact students' self-confidence and decrease morale, which may also result in early dropouts.

Based on our observation students accumulate backlogs in their 1st and 2nd Year, while they are settling in. If they are not addressed in the right time, they get cumulative and difficult to clear backlogs and also clear current subjects.

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Unfortunately, slow learning students are not very well organized with their time management and lack strategy in clearing backlogs. Clear guidance and strategy is required to address the backlogs. Most of these strategies are student-specific, based on their interest, depth of knowledge in foundational courses and learning capacity. It is very time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Practices

After exploring various programs and strategies, we have come up with a strategy and an optimal process to support students in clearing their backlogs. We have come up with a three-stage process, Identity, Plan and Execute. As the prime objective of this program is to help students to clear their backlogs, instead of covering all the five units, students were given refresher classes on three units which is essential to clear the examinations, and extra material is provided to the students who are capable and want to go beyond clearing the examinations. HoDs along with class teachers announce the list of the subjects where the refresher classes will be provided. Material and periodic classes will be provided and before the semester final examinations, in-person refresher classes are provided with the view of clearing the examinations.

Identify: As part of the identification phase, immediately after the announcement of results, we collect backlogs data from the University.

Plan: Based on the data collected, HODs are requested to prepare a Backlog Analysis Report and present it to the principal, the rest of HODs, and management for review. A meeting is called for to review the backlogs, analyze the reason for the failures, and initiate to come up with a plan.

Execute: A meeting is called to review the analysis and come up with a strategy. The challenge is, managing faculty resources and finding time slots in the timetable to arrange refresh classes for the students. Due to time, resources and other constraints, we have decided to select the top 4 backlogs from each department.

The above backlog analysis report is used to collect, analyze and prepare an action plan based on the strategy written by HODs.

Evidence of Success:

This is one of the successful programs in the college that helped slow learners and students who want to have another opportunity to clear the backlogs and to achieve their career


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dreams. This program has been constantly improvised semester after semester to achieve its desired results. Success is measured in two ways. They are: how many registered were able to clear and how many students achieved higher marks. The following is a sample list of courses conducted as part of the Backlog Reduction Program.

Problems Encountered

When a student has a backlog, clearing the backlog immediately in the next semester is the best thing to do for the students. The more it prolongs, the harder it becomes for the students to clear the exam. One of the challenges encountered is engaging students continuously until next semester exams are a challenge. If the students lose touch, it will get difficult to clear the exam. To overcome this issue, the institution has decided to create a whatsapp group for the backlog and periodically post notes and lecture classes to keep student touch with the subject.

Another problem encountered is students have difficulty balancing between current subjects and backlogs. In order to address this, advised having student pods with similar interests work together. This gives them support and learning is faster when working in teams.

Another big challenge is finding time slots for refresher classes. This constraint has been addressed by taking online classes in the evenings and weekends.

Summary

Even though the institution's objective is not to have student backlogs, it is unavoidable. The institution has come up with a new approach "Predictive Analysis", which predicts the possible failure of a student. This is an innovative and out-of-box approach to predict success in a particular subject. This is done using a combination of feedback mechanism, attendance, and performance in the mid-exams. This has been implemented in the last couple of years and taking a mature state. Predictive analysis along with the Backlog reduction program will certainly help slow learners in a big way to achieve their career dreams.


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