



Loreto College, Kolkata

Best Practices

2021-2022

TITLE OF THE PRACTICE

The LORETO LEADS Programme, - Loreto Empowerment and Development Series for Students

OBJECTIVE

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Loreto College aims at enhancement of quality culture and academic excellence. Upholding the Vision of IQAC which focuses on being instrumental in organizing programmes on quality-related themes and facilitating the creation of a learner – centric environment, the **LORETO LEADS Programme** was initiated to add value to the lives of the stakeholders. Imbibing Skill enhancement, dissemination of knowledge and fostering global competencies from young alumnae of the college were the prime objectives of this practice, which would empower students for life.

CONTEXT

Students begin their college journey with hopes and dreams of earning a degree and securing their future with a career of their choice. But they are faced with obstacles and challenges that can seem insurmountable. It is imperative for an institution to identify areas of concern and foster a culture of innovation and creativity.

The areas identified reflected the lack of spirit/ guidance of entrepreneurship, lack of clarity about new avenues in higher education and research methodology. Students were unaware about making financial investments, career options and techniques to prepare for competitive examinations.

Activities were planned to cater to the needs of the students. The needs and desires of the student community were identified by a democratic approach. The Student President and Vice President who form an integral part of the IQAC had voiced the opinion of the students. This provided an appropriate platform for exchange of ideas and nurtured latent points of view. The need of the hour was to provide them with exposure to interact and be mentored by professionals. This would lay the foundation for acquiring new skill sets. This addressed the concern of high unemployment rates as well as motivated students to desire upskilling for employability. Capacity building would ensure that students graduate from college as mature informed citizens.

THE PRACTICE

Young people across the globe are stepping up to innovation challenges, using their energy, their curiosity and creativity to steer a course towards a better future. Upholding the Vision of the College that the Institution must be a dynamic entity, to discern the changing needs and readjust structures and activities, the IQAC introduced the LORETO LEADS Programme. This initiative prioritized human values and organized events which aimed at the quest for excellence.

- **Entrepreneurial skills** - An interactive session on Introduction of Start Ups kindled the spark of entrepreneurship amongst the students. This initiative assisted students to launch *Start-ups* and enabled them to unleash their latent potential and focus on entrepreneurship. They explored the challenges and opportunities associated with *Start-ups* under the able guidance of the resource person, who is a legal expert.
- **Financial independence** – LEADS assisted students to strive for financial freedom and motivated participants to take control of their finances and plan for the future. This enabled students to manage money and mobilize savings. Efforts were made to expose students to explore technological skills and knowledge to make the right decisions with their financial resources.
- **Alignment with IPR** -The IQAC commemorated the World Intellectual Property Day and organized a Webinar which was in alignment with the above-said theme which focused on IP and Youth innovating for a better future. It educated the students on IPR and associated global policy, enabled students to understand the modalities of copyright and explore technological skills to adhere to IPR in academics. These series of programmes instilled confidence in students which paved the way for academic excellence.
- **Career Guidance** - The main objective is to enable students to face an Interview Board and frame an effective Curriculum Vitae. A session was conducted to highlight the importance of Human Resource (HR) in the Corporate sector. It geared specifically towards women in the HR sector and the advantages of gaining employability skills. The emphasis was to assist students to achieve confidence to face an interview, motivate and inspire participants to opt for HR as a career option and enable students to frame an effective Curriculum Vitae.
- **Technologically sound** - Promoting the use of technology has been an integral part of all the initiatives undertaken under the aegis of the LEADS Programme, instill a scientific approach and focus on performance. Through the IIT Spoken tutorial the use of ICT has become an integral part, instilling a scientific approach with a focus on performance.
- **Environmental consciousness** – One of the key functions of IQAC is to forge partnerships with key organizations, to inculcate quality culture Collaboration with partner organizations like IUCN, and Resilience Innovation Knowledge Academy, Japan ensured environmental consciousness. An International Lecture Series on environmental sustainability enabled students to interact with internationally acclaimed environmentalists and keep abreast with the current status of ecological issues and environmental concerns. These initiatives were a step towards inculcating quality culture in academics and research, which is the Vision of IQAC.
- **Gender sensitization and social inclusion** – An address on Women in Leadership:

Achieving an Equal Future in a Covid – 19 World , the United Nations theme for International Women’s’ Day 2021 familiarized students to challenge themselves to strive for a bright future for themselves and other women.

A collaboration with MENTAID provided students with hands on experience of what inclusivity would mean in contemporary India.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

There is a robust system for conscious, consistent and catalytic action to improve the academic performance of the institution. The credibility of the institution is maintained by promoting measures to ensure quality enhancement through internalization of quality culture.

All the programmes organized as part of LORETO LEADS were reviewed and evaluated by the stakeholders, by way of Feedback forms. The analysis of the feedback received was done by the IQAC Coordinator and was included as part of the Report uploaded in the college website. The Event ratings were obtained within two days of the receipt of the feedback from the participants. The suggestions offered by the students were discussed by the organizing committee in consultation with the Principal. These were to a great extent incorporated and considered while planning for future events. Students engaged in deep and meaningful conversation among their peer group; in the hope that they would put this into reflective practice. Evidence of success was seen in tender initiatives of students establishing themselves in small ventures helping them grow in confidence.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND RESOURCES REQUIRED

Contacting appropriate resource persons who would develop upon the aim of the LORETO LEADS programme was a challenge to contend with. Establishing sustainable academic relationship and collaboration with institutions of national and international renowned was overcome with repeated communication over a long period of time.

Organizing events with professionals across time zones involved late webinars much beyond college hours; this affected active participation among the stakeholders. Some initiatives were stalled due to external reasons beyond our control; we hope to overcome these.

TITLE OF THE PRACTICE- Loreto College Incubation Centre

OBJECTIVE

The Loreto College Incubation Centre (LCIC) aspires to promote a culture of social entrepreneurship and innovation amongst the students of the College. We acknowledge that an institution must be a dynamic entity that readjusts structures and activities in response to the changing needs of society and the world at large. The LCIC hopes to contribute to women's empowerment and environmental sustainability with unswerving commitment and a prioritization of human values contributing to build an interdependent India and to enable students to empower others, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goal No. 12 stating responsible consumption and production, rethink, reduce, reuse, refurbish, repurpose and recycle.

CONTEXT

The Loreto College Incubation Centre aims at creating an awareness about alternative career choices that are available to young women, instilling in them values of commitment and leadership, in order to empower them with the entrepreneurial skills required for setting up socially relevant and sustainable business models and to motivate them to create employment opportunities for others. In keeping with the Sustainable Development Goal No. 12 stating responsible consumption and production, rethink, reduce, reuse, refurbish, repurpose and recycle.

In order to successfully execute this plan, LCIC in collaboration with external experts and partners provides, technical, advisory, infrastructural and basic financial assistance to students. As fund generation was a primary concern, the pilot project of the LCIC was devised to address this issue. This pilot project engages in the production of eco-friendly bags by refurbishing fabric collected from donors. The income generated from the sale of these bags is being utilised as *seed money* to fund student *start-ups*.

THE PRACTICE

The education system of India, for the longest time focused on academic training, resulting in a gap between industry demands and students' qualifications. With the changing times, higher education was compelled to introduce practical industry needs, in order to make students employable and not just educated. According to surveys (India Today), India is the world's fastest growing *start up* hub. *Start-ups* are one way of helping students explore their creative potential and converting each into successful business models.

As an undergraduate college, affiliated to the University of Calcutta, student progression over the years shows an inclination towards higher education. Very few students opt for campus placements; some even drop a year in order to pursue a degree of their choice in a preferred institution. By creating an environment which promotes awareness on entrepreneurial skill development, institutions open up new avenues for students. In a country like ours many students come from backgrounds which are supported by businesses, small enterprises, factories or shop units. Often students are hesitant to take on their family business ventures. This is because of the lack of skills, exposure and long-term vision. Through a well-structured plan of action, the LCIC hopes to encourage students to undertake entrepreneurial opportunities in order to strengthen entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem on campus.

Students will thus be encouraged to experiment, observe, and network in order to come up with original ideas. By taking chances while in college with encouraging teachers students will not be afraid to fail and will be prepared to overcome failure- an intrinsic component of the innovating experience.

One of the first problems encountered in launching the Loreto College Incubation Centre was adequate knowledge of establishing and running an Incubation unit. Assistance was sought from the IIM Calcutta Innovation Park who graciously guided us through the process of establishing the Incubation Centre and conducting initial sessions for students. The second, but more pressing concern was generation of funds. In order to generate funds, it was decided that the College would either start a pilot project of its own or engage with corporates and industry stakeholders to raise funds. Another challenge before us was influencing and changing the mind-set of students and parents as they have been conditioned to follow the beaten path in academia. Motivating students, to develop and sustain interest in projects while balancing their academic commitments has been a vital concern.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

The LCIC has successfully engaged with IIM Calcutta Innovation Park to launch the Loreto College Incubation Centre and designed the policy document. Two talks were conducted for the students, one by entrepreneur, Mr. Gaurav Kapoor and another by Ms. Namami Ghosh, Head Portfolio Management at IIM Calcutta Innovation Park. The pilot project for LCIC was devised- making eco-friendly bags by refurbishing donated fabric. For the project a fabric collection drive was initiated and a sewing machine was donated by an alumna, Mrs. Smita Bajoria.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND RESOURCES REQUIRED

While initiating the LCIC the main problems encountered included fund generation to be able to provide seed money to students in the future. Since none of the members of the staff had any experience in entrepreneurship, external help had to be sought to understand the nuances of starting and sustaining an incubation unit.

The primary resources required were a separate work space with adequate storage facility. A sewing machine was donated by an ex-student while one was funded by the College for the production of bags. The female tailor employed for production of bags came to us on the recommendation of a well-wisher who spoke of the financial crisis the lady was going through. By employing her the LCIC upheld its commitment to the empowerment of women while engaging in social entrepreneurship.