

## 7.2.1

### **Best Practice 1:**

#### **Title: Institutionalizing ‘Value Education’ as a Credit Based Course.**

While we do not compromise on our excellence in academics and extracurricular activities, our USP continues to be the promotion of ideals and values. For nearly fifty years, our Sanctuary Period, has been our pride. Under Autonomy it has now been **institutionalized as our credit-based course on value education.**

#### **The Context:**

The need to incorporate value education as an intrinsic part of higher education has been the concern of educationists since the Education Commission (better known as the Kothari Commission) in 1964-66 proclaimed that ‘while a combination of ignorance with goodness may be futile, that of knowledge with the lack of essential values may be dangerous’. The Delors Commission (UNESCO-1996) Report on Education for Twenty First Century, clearly states that ‘education goes beyond generating knowledge and applying it. Its objective has to be all round human development’. The Commission has rightly suggested, "in the situation that is developing, it is equally important for us to give a proper values-orientation to our educational system". The World Conference on higher education (held in Paris in October 1998), firmly affirmed that their main mission now-a-days is to educate responsible citizens.

St. Mira's College, was founded by legendary visionary Sadhu T.L.Vaswani in 1962 as one of the pioneering colleges set up exclusively for girls in this part of the country. ‘Education’, as Sadhu Vaswani perceived it, ‘is a process of drawing out the inherent potential of man... transforming you from a mere being into a human being’. Hence in creating St. Mira’s he created an academic institution with a difference. He envisioned an institution that advocates a holistic concept of education, Swami Vivekananda’s concept of man-making education. With his intuitive foresight he believed deeply in woman-power and the woman-spirit, long before feminism was even thought of. Reflecting the ideals that our visionary founder had envisioned for St. Mira’s the College mission statement unfolds as: **‘Empowerment of women students through an integrated education of the head, the hand and the heart shaped by character and competence building.’**

#### **Objectives:**

1. To emphasize on character building education in the midst of all our academic pursuits
2. To foster the ideals of simplicity, service and prayer which remain at the root of all our developmental activities.
3. To train the students not only to sharpen their intellect, but also sensitize their hearts through social and community service
4. To help fructify our character building endeavours we have institutionalized a well-structured Value Education course which is compulsory for all our students.

#### **The Practice:**

Among the unique features of the College, the College Sanctuary takes pride of place. Our daily curriculum begins with the Sanctuary where the students are taught that life is larger than livelihood and the end of knowledge is service. The 30-minute sanctuary period, serves as a focal point in imparting holistic education. The College use this daily period to inculcate moral and

ethical values, to build character and competence, impart reverence for all forms of life, to build sensitivity to social and national issues and to develop in the student's life coping skills.

Through the forum of the sanctuary, students of all disciplines are given basic awareness of their constitutional rights, privileges as well as their civic duties and responsibilities as citizens of a democratic, secular republic. This time is devoted to prayer, reflection and sharing of thoughts on the ART OF LIVING. Indian ideals and the eternal values of life are sought to be inculcated in the students, through this unique feature of the college. Every day there is a talk that has either an inspirational message regarding values or relates to the students in terms of career, development and growth, relationships, attitude to life, commitment and goals.

Not only is the sanctuary a crucial part of an aim to impart value-based education, it also fosters a strong sense of belonging among teachers and students. It serves as an assembly which promotes cultural and religious harmony and strives to instill in the students love for ideals of Honesty, Integrity, Ethics, Compassion for animals, Reverence for all life, Respect for elders, Care for environment, etc. An attempt is made to make a study of the lives of heroes of humanity and saints of all religions. Interfaith prayers are conducted. Important festivals and sacred days of all religions are observed.

At the end of the year, the students appear for a 100 marks paper on the values imparted to them. These marks are reflected in their marksheet.

#### **Evidence of Success:**

Our unique concept of imparting values through a daily session carved out for the purpose has been deeply appreciated by all our visitors. It has indeed impacted many students and it is in their sharing of experiences even long after they have left college, that we comprehend the success of our method.

#### **Problems encountered and resources required:**

Present day curriculum is full of content of techno informative data consisting of facts, figures, theories and laws etc. The education of today has sharpened the intellect but neglected the heart. One of the challenges of the College is to make value education effective and interesting to the modern youth. Till date, the College have not encountered any problems regarding either monetary resources or human resources so far. The college has constructed a Sanctuary Hall where students along with the staff assemble every morning for this special session. The Sanctuary Hall is equipped with an efficient sound system, an LCD / overhead projector and a screen. The students and teachers actively and whole-heartedly participate in all the activities that take place in the Sanctuary.

#### **Best Practice 2**

##### **Title of the practice: Mental Well-Being Program**

##### **The context :**

Mental health concerns in higher education are on the rise and India is reporting an alarming increase in cases of depression, anxiety and suicide attempts among students. It was in this context, the Mental Well-bring Program for students of St. Mira's College for Girls, Pune was launched in July 2019. It is a full-time program initiated by Department of Psychology to address mental

health needs and concerns of the students. Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention are the three major arms of this program. Increase awareness about four major themes: Stress, Depression, Anxiety, and interpersonal relationships

### **Objectives of the practice:**

1. To help students identify various mental health concerns faced by them
2. To reduce stigma amongst students around mental health needs and concerns
3. To encourage help seeking and bridge the gap between students and College counsellor
4. To enhance sensitivity and empathy about mental health needs and concerns
5. Identify students displaying early signs and symptoms of a mental health concern and provide early intervention
6. To integrate life skills listed by WHO through awareness sessions, support groups and counselling services.

### **The Practice**

#### **Structure of the program:**

There are three major arms to our mental wellbeing program: Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention. There is growing evidence that mental wellbeing must incorporate promotion, prevention, and early intervention.

- **Mental health promotion: Online Classroom Awareness Sessions**
- **Prevention: Focused group therapy sessions, Support group sessions and Awareness sessions** aim at identifying risk factors for student's mental health and enhancing protective factors like peer support, sense of trust etc., that promote mental well-being.
- **Intervention: Online individual counselling sessions** that are appropriate for and specifically target people displaying the early signs and symptoms of a mental health problem or mental disorder, and people developing or experiencing a first episode of mental disorder

#### **Process:**

Each step of this plan of action has various sub steps and processes.

- Step 1: *Identifying students' mental health needs and concerns*
- Step 2: *Creating Timetable for Classroom Awareness sessions with the help of CRs and Class teachers*
- Step 3: *Familiarizing students with aspects of mandatory online classroom awareness sessions.*
- Step 4: *Implementation of mandatory online classroom awareness sessions using ZOOM or Google Meet*
- Step 5: *Initiating conversations about online support groups and introduce Group therapy sessions*
- Step 6: *Preparing and sharing a group session weekly itinerary with the students to participate*
- Step 7: *Implementation of Group therapy session (1 session per week) and Support group session (1 session per week)*
- Step 6: *Identifying students at high risk.*

**Obstacles faced if any and strategies adopted to overcome them**

The major obstacle was familiarising students with the language of mental health and to encourage help seeking behaviour. We also wanted to reiterate the importance of the program at part with other academic courses. This obstacle was handled by integrating the program as mandatory and allotting a dedicated time and space for the same within the timetable.

**Impact of the practice**

Over 1800 students have taken benefit of the program in the year 2019-20.

**Implementation Summary:**

Type of service	Total no. of sessions	Themes covered	Total Students benefitted
Classroom Awareness sessions	52	Stress, Anxiety and Depression	1800
Group therapy sessions	16	Examination anxiety & Interpersonal relationships	240
Individual Counselling sessions	215		215
<b>COVID-19 Mental Well-being Response</b>			
Online support group sessions	12	Dealing with Lock down, Managing anxiety and stress due to covid-19	410
<b>Community outreach</b>			
Webinar series	3	Strategies to manage Anxiety, Building healthy social connections, Mindfulness and Mental Wellbeing	375

Mental Well-being awareness sessions were conducted for all degree college classes including BA, BCom, BBA, BCA, BCS and Junior College students.

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