

## **S.P. Mandali's**

### **R.A.Podar College of Commerce & Economics**

#### **Best Practice**

##### **1. Name of the Practice**

Inclusive Learning: Learn India

##### **2. Goal**

In the complicated conditions of the current times, knowledge of basic financial concepts like banks, savings and investments is crucial. There is no human that does not do worse in the world for lack of such knowledge, understanding the same is paramount. Besides, there is no dearth of such information amongst the relatively better sections of the society. It is, ironically, the weaker sections of the society, those who most need such skills, who are found lacking in the same. It is the aim of the college to do its bit in bridging this gap and promote 'inclusive learning' in the society.

##### **3. The Context**

It is seen that the vicious circle of poverty closes in upon its victims very tightly. Education has seen to be an important cure to such ills which however, unfortunately comes at a cost not always affordable to the poor and has failed to be inclusive. These costs, of course, are not always monetary in nature. Social constraints, spatial constraints, traditional issues also come in way of the propagation of such knowledge to those who need it. It has been seen while designing the program that it is more difficult for our intended beneficiaries to come to us than for us to reach them. In certain cases, it is noted that a lack of prior knowledge which leads to the current problem, also makes it difficult for correcting it through formal channels. Accordingly it has been deemed fit to conduct the sessions in a language and a manner that is easily accessible and understandable.

##### **4. Practice**

According to the problems and principles laid down above, the entire Learn India program process has been planned out to firstly, reach out to the maximum number of beneficiaries possible, whether by asking them to visit the college where possible, or sending student volunteers to visit them where the former does not apply. The modules are prepared by the students themselves and are of a language and manner that is most easily accessible. The modules are prepared in English, Hindi and Marathi. Every year, a team of students is identified to lead the initiative and plan out the course for the year under the guidance of a teacher. Then volunteers from across the college are asked to step forward. Students from Podar visit colleges and communities and impart knowledge to people in need of it. Students have visited various rural areas within Maharashtra

such as Bahranpur and other villages dotted across the state and sometimes outside the state. The schools visited are usually those where the medium of instruction is vernacular. The books printed are complete with illustrations. Such supplementary material has been found useful together with the efforts of the students.

What is unique about this practice propagated by R. A. Podar College is that instead of trying to hand-out people a degree or a certificate, it aims at inculcating in them a more fundamental understanding, which though never seen on paper, will go miles towards helping them in the real world. Learn India, instead of teaching its beneficiaries everything, aims at providing specific and specialized knowledge in the hopes that it may lead to better understanding on parts of the program's students and more quality efforts on the part of the volunteers. Learn India has across the five years visited a number of schools (more than 25 in 2015 alone) and benefitted hundreds. In 2013, a session was conducted in the college premises for taxi-drivers. Such out-of-the-usual sessions have been a vital part of Learn India's vision for inclusive learning for all.

The areas covered are mostly rural or on the margins of society. Schools targeted are small ones with not many teachers and too many students.

On the other hand, the specific nature of the activity also provides certain clear limitations and constraints. It is not possible to expand the minds of the people we cater to in any other horizons. Besides, there exists the sheer physical constraint of the number of students that can be working towards the practice and the extent of geographical area that can be covered.

## **5. Evidence of Success**

Every year, a certain tentative target about how many people should be reached is set and reviewed at the end. Beginning last year, there has been a practice of obtaining from the principals of schools where such sessions are conducted their feedback on the same. The same has been overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the work taken up by Podar College. Such results show that the idea that the community needs such specific services rendered by students is correct and that there is further scope for expanding such operations and thus almost creating a parallel informal channel of education to supplement the existing formal one.

## **6. Problems encountered and Resources Required**

The problems of Learn India are largely physical. Since the operation is mostly in the hands of the college's students expenses are kept to a minimum and travelling fares, when occasioned due to outstation visits are the only major expense. The constraints that do affect Learn India is that at a time there are only so many people that can be visited and that there are still many, other than school children who could benefit from the activities but remain beyond reach due to social seclusion, amongst other reasons. This only underlines the gravity of the problem that the practice aims to address.

## **7. Notes**

It has been noticed that it is better to allow a student body to form their own content for the module as it would be based more on what students themselves practicing the activities they are to teach face. Reliance on practical facts rather than bookish theory goes a long way towards improving the accessibility of the program. If an institution were to adopt the same, it is advisable to form a nexus of institutions and working on the synergy thus created.