

Best Practices.

i. Inter Departmental Seminar

Objectives of the Practice

Having a healthy academic environment that presents opportunities of collaborative learning is a distinguishing mark of any academic institution that strives towards excellence. With this intent, the IQAC has been playing a vital role in organizing inter-departmental seminars with the following aspirations

- To encourage and provide a platform to the teaching faculty them to share from their knowledge and expertise.
- To enable teachers to cultivate interest and venture into subject matters such as local politics, literature, history, economics, etc. and topics outside the existing structure of syllabi which can add to the knowledge bank and research works produced from the college.

The Context

The current system of education in the undergraduate level in Nagaland is one that leaves very little room for teachers to go for further studies and research. The system being based on a model of transfer of textbook-based knowledge and information, it does not present many opportunities to give an impetus for research-oriented activities. This is one of the reasons why the teachers for the most part are indifferent towards research and lack the experience and procedural know-how of conducting seminars, workshop, conferences etc.

One way in which institutions of higher education can meet the challenges thus posed is through intentional incorporation of research-based knowledge into the existing curriculum. This can be done through researchworks carried out by the teachers and consciously developing a research-oriented consciousness in the academic life of the college. Such a move will prove to be most beneficial to both.

The practice.

Being the parent cell of the Inter-departmental seminar, the Research Cell takes the initiative and responsibility for creating the roster of the seminars for all the departments presenting papers. The Inter-departmental seminar is an annual cycle and is conducted on every third Saturday of the month.

With the aim to promote greater inter-disciplinary learning and research, the topics of the seminars are wide-ranging with themes that are of relevance and common interest to all the departments of the college. Currently, there are 8 departments (Economics, Education, English, Functional English, History, Political Science, Sociology and Tenyidie) in the Arts Stream, Environmental Science and the Department of Commerce. Presenters are encouraged to present on varied topics from culture studies, international politics, research methodologies, entrepreneurship, finance and business studies, etc.

All logistical preparations of the seminar are undertaken by the concerned department whose turn it is to conduct the seminar on the appointed day. It is the endeavor of the college that such practices will encourage and motivate more faculty members to take up research in inter-disciplinary areas. The interactive discussions are recorded. The papers are then catalogued by the Research Cell for publication in the annual journal of the college- 'Impressions'. These papers are also used as reference materials for the teachers as well as students. Acknowledging the success of this exercise amongst the faculty, this best practice was also introduced to the students as part of their internal assessment process where they are made to present papers on a given topic and marks are allotted based on their performance.

As a part of this practice on a larger scale, the college organized and conducted a Two day National Seminar on 14th and 15th of November 2019 on, "Emerging debates & Issues in N.E. India" National workshop in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) on the theme 'Entrepreneurship Development make in India' on 10th December 2020. Additionally, an International Webinar on 'Violence Against Women and Women's Writing in English in Nagaland' was also conducted on the 19th and 20th of May 2021.

Evidence of success

On seeing the success of the inter-departmental seminar amongst the faculty, seminars have also been introduced and encouraged among the students as part of their internal assessment process. This practice is proving to be very beneficial for the students as it gives them the experience of exploring potential areas of personal research interest. It is hoped that such experiences will give them more confidence as they go for higher studies. Since its introduction, the inter-departmental seminars have evolved as a dynamic force, yielding more innovative ideas among the faculty members in collaborating on topics of mutual interest. Such activities are helping foster better intellectual as also social relationships between teachers. Some indicators of the success of this best practice, to name a few, are paper presentations in national seminars, successful publication of books and participation as resource persons in district, State, National as well as International level seminars.

Problems encountered and Resources required

- Researching and presenting one's ideas and works to peers and colleagues can be a daunting affair for many. Understandably, the adoption of this best practice was met with some apprehensions. One of the greatest problems initially was to challenge the faculty members to take the leap and participate willingly. Except for a few, many were not very responsive. However, as the seminars carried on each month, the general consensus has been that such a research-oriented practice not only presents opportunities for the teachers to learn and grow, but also benefits the students as well; that creating a healthy growth-oriented academic environment can only benefit the institution as a whole.
- Financial resources entailed by this practice by way of printing certificates, programmes and refreshments were initially borne by the institution. The IQAC of the college started operating its own bank account from 2016, henceforth all research related expenses are sponsored through this source.
- At the student level, although paper presentations can be conducted for Honours classes with less number of students, conducting seminars in general classes is not feasible due to the magnitude of student numbers.

ii. Cultural Conservation

Objective of the Practice

For traditional indigenous societies like the Nagas, culture is one of the most defining features of our identity as a people. In the face of rapid modernization, much of our cultural knowledge systems and practices have been lost, especially with the death of the older generations. Yet, much remains to be reclaimed, remembered and revived. The onus now lies with the younger generations. It is thus becoming increasingly pertinent to keep our indigenous culture alive by finding creative ways of continuing our cultural practices, and keeping our material culture and art forms relevant to our changing times.

The Context

In Nagaland, like elsewhere the current system of education is an inheritance from the colonial legacy. There may have been many beneficial aspects of this consequence of history, yet it has come at the expense of alienating generations of students from their cultural roots. A complete overhaul of the current flawed system may not be practicable. However, exploring ways to integrate traditional knowledge is within our capacities.

With this objective, the college has adopted **cultural conservation** as one of the best practices and endeavors to inculcate a sense of cultural rootedness and disseminate awareness on the importance of cultural conservation through the following measures:

1. Celebration of festivals and showcase our attires, art and craft, dance and music and educating ourselves on their significance.
2. Revisiting our narratives through oral storytelling, preserving and study of vernacular languages.
3. Reviving traditional sports and indigenous recreational games during college activities
4. Documentation and conducting of pilot studies of cultural knowledge and art forms.

The Practice:

1. On the occasion of the **Annual Cultural Day**, usually held during the College Week, students and faculty are instructed to wear Naga traditional attire. Traditional folk dances, songs, games are performed and played. Students run food stalls where they sell indigenous cuisine of the various tribes. Following the practice of traditional communal feasts, both students and faculty partake in the festivities. The meanings and symbolism of all these are shared both in personal interactions as well in the form of public instruction.

2. Cultural memory can be kept alive through many ways. Food is one of them. The main objective of the **Cultural Food Fest** that takes place during the annual cultural day has been to expose both students and faculty alike to cuisine indigenous to other Naga tribes. Nagas comprise of 18 major tribes and every tribe is known for their unique cuisine and food preparations. Indigenous food can be an important source of our cultural history. Not only are they delicacies to be savoured, they are markers of our unique identity.
3. One of the objectives of the **Cultural Museum** was to make our material culture more accessible to both students and faculty. Many have contributed textiles, crafts, artifacts as well as traditional tools and objects to our collection. In the process of participating in the collection and curation, students have been able to collect oral histories and narratives, thus enabling them to learn the history, significance and uses of the materials they collect and then innovate ways to conserve and transmit this knowledge, be it in the space of the museum or beyond.
4. In their lesson plans, lectures and assignments, the teaching faculty is encouraged to **integrate local and traditional examples or applications** wherever relevant.
5. Kohima College is the first college in Nagaland to introduce the **Tenyidie Department** which is a vibrant vernacular undergraduate program. It has produced many litterateurs and academics in this field. The existence of this subject has been an added advantage in our objective of introducing cultural conservation as one of our best practices.
6. Realizing the role of vernacular languages in the conservation of tribal cultures, the **college magazine** was the first and is currently the only one in the state that encourages and publishes writing in all Naga vernacular languages.

Evidence of Success

The declaration of Wednesdays as Cultural Attire Day has further facilitated and enhanced our best practice. It might also be stated that our college can claim some credit for setting an example found worthy of replication across the department. Though many faculty and students were already in the habit of wearing their cultural attire prior to this declaration, having a day set apart for wearing cultural has only confirmed that we are on the right path. Students are happy to wear a traditional item once a week and they are also prompted to learn more about the items they are wearing. In so doing, a deeper appreciation for the much diversity within the broader Naga identity can also be seen.

Additionally, as part of their skill development activity, students are encouraged to make traditional and cultural handicraft items which are then sold during the food fest.

(ii) During the College week, one of the many attractions is the wrestling competition with many students enthusiastically participating and vying for the coveted title. Many of our students have participated in various wrestling tournaments. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, sports activities for the last 2 years were put on hold, but once the situation normalises,

students will be able to train themselves and bring laurels to the college as was done in the past.

Problems encountered and resources required:

Observation of festivals/Cultural Days in the college have been a great success. However, the successful execution of such programmes requires a good amount of time. Setting up the arena for traditional games like wrestling entails a lot of time, money and energy.

Procurement of items for cultural museum is also very time-consuming and an expensive endeavour. Often, items are personal family heirlooms and cannot be parted with. Many times, those that may be procured are beyond our financial capacity. The collection of oral histories involves travel and proper documenting devices such as audio and video recorders. The cost for procuring these items, expense for travel as well as training students and faculty in the right methodology and knowledge of equipment use is often beyond our current budget.