

Constructing Students' Character everyday

Goal: Education implies cultivating of character through the persistent advancement of intrinsic characteristics of an individual. It means to alter the pace of the individual's reality with that of the public. This change includes fortifying one's character and union of ethics. The current educational framework comes up short on these ethical principles. We aim to train students with ethically and morally sound doctrines that can help construct a better society. The result in the long run would be the realisation of a Utopian Society in the real world, enabling all to live in righteousness and peace, sharing goodwill among others.

The Context: "Moral" alludes to reflections, wants, or activities that conflict with or stifle personal responsibilities for the sake of our desires and the society. Moral practice and change of character can be individual or collective. By moral instruction programs we allude to facilitation of College-based etiquette improvement.

Presently, Value Education is largely excluded from institutions across the country. Yet, our ancient Universities such as Nalanda and Taxila, concentrated on conferring moral instruction to their understudies. Those educators laid emphasis on the need to turn students into ideal personalities. Qualities like respecting seniors, teachers, and having order and restriction in life were instilled into students by teachers.

Comprehensively, ethical quality refers to trustworthiness of character, decency in demeanour, nonappearance of shades of malice like being scornful, jealous, disrespectful, dishonest, unfruitful, and so forth. A definitive target of education in our campus is to install these human qualities in the minds of our students.

The Practice: The lifeline of our practice is the Devotions that are conducted every morning. This makes a deep impact on the lives of the students by improving their quality at personal,

spiritual and academic levels. Around 100 different students attend the Devotions in the morning each day, filled with the aim of leading their lives purposefully.

Instructions on leading lives with morally correct principles, being honest with one another, the necessity of following certain etiquettes for quality living, the need in the society for bringing up people who can be courteous to one another, having exceptional manners that can be the hallmark of a civilized society, the dire need of leading a virtuous life in an immoral society, and the guidance that can be sought spiritually are some of the foundational pillars on which the Devotions in the morning are conducted. It would be an understatement to say that, at the least, half of the population that participates in the devotions have their lives transformed for the better of the society.

Next in line is the Moral Instruction class conducted for students who show inclination towards the brighter side of life. When such a possibility is told to the students, most of them jump at the opportunity of improving their lives. Many of the students have had no such exposure and guidance towards any such programmes in their lives. This is a dream come true for many. This class brings about startling differences in the demeanour of the students, their lives being transformed dramatically in the process. At the end of the classes, their characters are so much changed that even those very close to those transformed students find it hard to believe what they see. When a character of a person is changed, the very person is changed.

One of the challenges faced in this was the deterioration of the students' quality after one or two moral instruction classes. This was shocking, considering the objective with which the classes were started, the energy with which the students enrolled in the class and the efficiency of the entire proceedings. It was analyzed that the students were in need of continuous classes to enable them gain ground on the new phase of their lives. The societal

pressure was too much for the students to be reformed in just a couple of classes. They needed more classes and exposure to the teachings of the classes.

Furthermore, it is to be noted that students from economically poor background (67.33%), socially suppressed (21%) with broken families and students with alcoholic and other addiction servitudes constitute our student population. Most of the student families are below poverty line, urging us to conduct moral and counselling classes for students to develop life skills. Acquiring one or two of the life skills by the students will turn out to bring a drastic transformation in their lives. Their economy will be boosted, their lifestyle changed and their morale charged with positivity.

Some of the life skills imparted to students are painting, jewel-making, typing, cooking, etc... These skills ensure that the students are equipped to fend for themselves when they step out of the portals of the college. The coupling of these skills with the moral instructions that they receive make the students exceptionally good, a rare commodity to find in the society, one that is always in demand. The transformed students are good at heart, gentle in spirit and skilled with an ability to lead their lives.

Evidence of success:

The Devotions conducted in the morning had various agenda that it needed to convey to the students. A challenge faced in this was the shortage of time to deal with all these qualities on a regular basis. This was solved by dealing with one topic a day, and thus have a coherent chain of thoughts connected by a common word; values.

The students who participated in Moral Instruction classes slipped back into their old lifestyles after attending just one or two classes. In order to surmount his challenge, once students evinced interest in such moral classes, continuity meetings were arranged to ensure

their growth gradually. They started attending those classes regularly. And then, there were seen changes in their lives. This became a roaring success, with the students being handheld by the instructors and teachers of the classes till they succeeded.

Students with terrible addictions have changed and are currently settled comfortably. Many students' life problems disappeared by their good conduct. This resulted in a wholesome development of their families.

Problems encountered: One of the most important challenges faced is the disparity in the ratio of the students and the moral instructors available. It is practically impossible to cater to all the students who are in the campus, making individual attention almost impossible. The stirring of every soul in the society needs to be done. And we are at a terrible disadvantage, with the instructors' count at a dangerously low level. We need more number of qualified moral instructors. This can be compensated by having faculty members who are more empathetic towards the souls and lives of the students under their care. When the campus is filled with such faculty members, it would be easily possible to reach the entire student community.

For the students and by the students

Goal:

One of the best methods of evaluating the students' standards and making them competitive in spirit and action is to encourage the spirit and culture of Peer Learning. This is encouraged at St. John's. Akin to the democratic principles voiced by Abraham Lincoln centuries ago, we advocate a learning environment that comprises students empowering other students. This makes the ordinary extra-ordinary and transforms mortals to immortals, in terms of achievements. Students become illustrious personalities at the end, standing tall in academics and building the society for the betterment of the world.

The Context:

The institution imparts holistic development in a student's life. The students withstand states of crises, conflicts, trials and innumerable tribulations in their progress towards education. Their obstacles seem insurmountable. But the flights of obstructive fantasy plaguing the students are broken by the education offered in the college, coupled with the various programmes conducted. Students from the financially lower rungs of the society are in need of unusually varied guidance on prevention of drug intake, sexual wellness, etiquettes and leadership qualities. Awareness programmes on sexual abuse, drug addiction, social ethics, manners and etiquette, make them conscientious. Thus, there is a need for such programmes for students with economically poor background, to be identified and given hope and confidence. Lack of such initiatives usually tends to block the creativity of students and prevent them from being responsible and hopeful, citizens with a purpose.

The Practice:

The faculty and the student-learners are well aware that it is the end that matters. In order to accomplish this, they incorporate new knowledge, behaviour, good attitude and skills that add to the range of student learning experiences.

The students organize programmes and leadership training sessions. This makes a colossal impact on the student community. The staff members observe, ready to guide them.

The senior students with good academic record help their juniors by taking extra classes. This develops a congenial and friendly atmosphere that promotes healthy relationship between the juniors and the seniors, keeping at bay, stress and tension. The learning that takes place off the working hours helps the poor students, filling them with hope. Around 448 students were involved in this mission.

The student-teachers guide their juniors to get their arrears cleared. They prepare handouts, notes and lead them in open discussions on various subjects. 'Under-the-tree-sessions,' a unique practice, gives light to the old school of learning. Thus, the student-teachers learn a lot by preparing their lessons and developing their leadership qualities. The seniors too, thereby, develop their organizing skills, management skills, accountability, teaching skills, etc...

Another unique practice is, the students handing over their text books and written notebooks to be used by the economically poor students, usually their juniors. This is a great boon for

the poor students, who otherwise have no option of buying books for learning. When this practice is prevalent throughout the college, the overall bond of the juniors and the seniors increases, strengthening them against negativity.

Students help a lot in maintaining the general library and department libraries by binding the books, pasting the torn pages, writing the access numbers, rearranging the books, digitalizing the books and dusting the books. 206 students were used as helpers for this mission.

Around 175 students were used in the admission process of the college.

First generation learners and below the 'Poverty Line' students get an encouraging amount as honorarium for their service on the campus.

100 students, with the thirst for a green canopy over the earth, planted saplings on special occasions. Furthermore, 200 students involve regularly for IQAC / NAAC work.

The students of St. John's always leave a positive mark whenever they visit a village to indulge in social work, towards the transition of the village society. Students who hail from remote villages give light to their villages by making the illiterate, literate. They educate the village children and on keeping the environment clean.

Around 600 volunteers were available for all the work, helping in all the programmes for smooth conduct.

Evidence of Success:

All the above mentioned programmes have been met with stupendous success. The proof of this is the record of students having completed their degrees with flying colours. Some students who were extremely poor in their communication skills and writing skills have passed in the examinations. This is a testimony to the success of the 'For the Students and By the Students' programme. The students who have emerged through this programme have good manners that beg attention, societal maturity that can handle any situation and are responsible. All these qualities have made them prominent pillars of the society, adding laurels to the institution. While many of them are placed in various jobs across the globe, some provide employment to others. Thus, this programme makes them stand tall amidst the ruins.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

This initiative was met with good applause and enthusiasm. However, the working hours of the college rained down on the goodwill of many potential participants. Many could not decide freely as to how regularly they could contribute their time and efforts. Students who worked part time could not make themselves available for this. Financial help was expected by many students to come and help in this venture. Lack of some more students who could involve themselves in this noble work was one of the challenges faced in this initiative. It would strengthen the cause of this initiative if students with financial freedom and availability of time were more in number.