

## **Practice1. Institution – Society Reciprocity**

### **Objectives of the Practice**

- ensuring active and creative societal involvement in the development of students through collaborating with communities related to it
- to facilitate the creative interventions of alumni and local public in mentoring students
- to encourage initiatives of students beyond classrooms, so that they could learn by doing things together
- to make the most out of the physical infrastructure available for the benefit of local community and academic community
- to incorporate the artistic skills, knowledge and expertise of the local people in the architectural and design innovations of college
- to deepen the local knowledge potential through international institutional collaborations
- to mobilise additional resources through cooperative moves, and focus specifically on the neglected aspects of the culture of northern Malabar
- to bring international scholars and local community together around research

### **The Context**

One of the benchmarks of Brennen College's thrust on self-development and its productive relationship with larger society is its reciprocity in academic, managerial and material aspects which enables students to imbibe social commitment as an integral component of their academic growth. Students are equipped to contribute to the enhancement of knowledge production in intimate collaboration with local public, formal students, parents and formal teachers. Our resolve is to create the spirit of cooperation and co-production in students, resulting in the overall development of the region.

Though this is a government college, the community had always owned it and had contributed towards mentoring of students, management of activities and mobilisation of resources, along with collaboration in joint projects. This is a relationship that goes much beyond the usual extension activities of similar institutions. Contributions in terms of cognitive and material resources are mutual. The existence of such an emergent space inculcates values of collaboration in knowledge production, development of infrastructure, and design of the whole institutional ecosystem.

### **4. The Practice**

1. BICCS, Brennen Inter University Centre for Convergent Studies, was established as a centre of excellence in the college where the available resources in Arts, Humanities and Social Science disciplines are integrated productively. It aims at providing long term international expertise to researchers from peripheries.
2. Brought international scholars and local community together around research
3. In order to solve the severe draught situation of the locality, the college offered 5 cents of land for the construction of a water tank which now is supplying water to the local people
4. The college is offering community services including blood donation, charity measures and social services in an unparalleled scale. Students of the college save their 'birthday funds' for supporting needy patients at Malabar cancer centre.
5. The College has joined hands with the Grama Panchayat and Sports Authority of India and provided land for the synthetic athletic track, which can be utilized by both the academic and the local communities.
6. 'Potheri Kunjhambu Study Centre' is instituted by the Department of Malayalam with the declared objective of doing research with public participation into the neglected aspects of literary traditions of North Malabar. This is another instance where college succeeded in elevating the extension work to new heights.

7. As part of the Quasquicentennial Anniversary Celebrations in 2015 - 16, the College, in collaboration with the Alumni, the Retired Teachers' Forum, and the public, organised programmes *Brennen Expo*, *Brennen Thalassery Book Fair and Literary Festival*, and '*Natakotsav*' which were instrumental in rejuvenating the intellectual life of the region.
8. The inauguration of the *Brennen Thalassery Book Fair and Literary Festival* was done by cutting a cake made in the shape of a book, reproducing the picture of the college on it, baked by Bakers' Association, Kerala. Cake is one of the three quintessential markers of Tellicherry, the others being Cricket and Circus. This symbolic gesture has in effect encapsulated the true spirit of reciprocity.
9. As part of the Quasquicentennial Anniversary Celebrations, *Chithrakara Koottayma* - a Camp for painters was organised, in which 25 painters from this region participated. The camp participants gifted their paintings done during the camp to the college which contribute immensely towards the aesthetic appeal of the buildings within campus..
10. Volunteers of the National Service Scheme has played leading role in making Dharmadam village the first 'Organic Farming Literate

#### 5. Evidence of Success

- BICCS, in collaboration with Ruhr University, Germany organised an international workshop, World renowned historians, archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists like Mahmood Kooria, (University of Laiden) Ophira Gamliel (University of Glasgow) and Rajan Gurukkal (Renowned historian) took part in the programme.
- In 2018 BICCS, in collaboration with D'Annunzio University of Chieti, Italy, organised International Lectures by Prof. Vasco La Salvia and Dr. Marco Moderato on "*Archaeological Research and Methodology*".
- Subsequent to this The British Library & Endangered Archives Programme entered into an agreement with Brennen College to digitise Arabi Malayalam documents from the region.
- University of Montreal joined hands with Government Brennen College for the promotion of the research carried out by Mr. Vincent Brilliant-Giroux on the Tradition of Theyyam.
- BICCS is working on **Madayi Project** . In this project, Ruhr University Germany, Glasgow University Ireland, Kerala Council for Historical Research and Kerala State Higher Education Council associated. The local people of Madayi also involved. The proposed project was an inquiry into a missing link in the premodern history of Islamic maritime trade networks between Southwest and Southeast Asia
- The college community is actively involved in social services. One of the evidence is the construction of house for homeless.
- The blood donation forum of the college is serving needy patients and is a first point of contact for the nearby hospitals
- The students are regularly supporting the activities of Malabar cancer centre through the project 'We can'.
- Students and teaching community actively involved in Kerala flood relief. The disaster fund contribution from the staff alone comes to 62 lakhs.

#### 6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

- Being a Government institution, the college has financial constraint on unleashing the full potential of various events and it needs to be solved out by availing public private participation or by setting up a special fund for the purpose.
- Another problem we encounter is the shortage of time because of the tight academic schedule. With the introduction of semester system and with introduction of many

other extracurricular activities in the campus we are constrained to limit the activities within the time frame.

- Some of the reciprocity initiatives are hindered by regulatory constraints imposed by the governments. This includes mandatory prior sanction and approval of higher authorities in collaborations and MoUs, strict precautions taken by auditory staff etc. We need special financial and auditory provisions for the smooth operations of our innovations.

### **7. Notes**

Reciprocity, in terms of both academic and societal interventions, is the hallmark of the institution, and is one of the major practices going into its total development. The innovative practice can be adopted by any higher educational institution. The practice essentially needs a committed academia, able leadership and responding community. The reciprocity initiative is helpful in transforming students into ideal citizens and better human beings. The international collaborations are a venue with larger potential and is a best tool to engage the community in the academic initiatives. Students will also benefit from the interactions and associations. More than that, it will be helpful in promoting the nation as a destination of academic excellence and innovations to the outer world. All these collaborations, though international in nature were successful initiatives at bridging the gap between knowledge production and the life-worlds of societies on the periphery.

### **Practice2. 'Ideas in Progress': Culture of Dialogues**

#### **Objectives of the Practice**

- to positively encourage learning community of scholars to share their tentative and unfinished ideas so that they could benefit from the critical comments from other members
- to familiarize students with an academic culture anchored on democracy and openness.
- to encourage students to apply their learned knowledge in coming to grip with, and contesting the contemporary issues.
- to provide potential research scholars a platform where they could articulate and develop their research problems with the help of quality input from scholars belonging to multiple disciplines .
- to extend the potential of the institution as a knowledge hub.
- to enable the student community to critically engage with the contemporary world and to intervene insightfully and in an informed manner in such developments
- to promote independent initiatives of students beyond classrooms

#### **The Context**

Contemporary social climate calls for an open, democratic academic culture that rejects all sorts of closures and promotes fearless, open-ended, interdisciplinary engagements that would result in a rigorous academic environment. The hallmark of a dynamic academic space is the existence of a vibrant academic community which facilitates joint knowledge production. The very prerequisite of any knowledge production enterprise is the sustained presence of such an ambience. Multiple independent initiatives in our institution were actively promoted in order

Strict disciplinary boundaries need to be transgressed in order to come to grip with the live contemporary issues of our life world. Without the existence of independent platforms, such cross disciplinary engagements seldom happens. Today's knowledge production practices demands the teachers and scholars to step out of their comfort zones and engage in intimate conversations with others from differing backgrounds. Since the institution offers courses in

arts, science, social science and humanities the chances are high for productive collaborations.

### **The Practice**

- The Department of English operates *Decalogue*, platform for critical engagements with cinema, and screenings of film and documentary texts. Interactive sessions with film and documentary makers, technicians, and academicians make the platform unique. Since the department offers Film Studies course at both UG and PG levels, the platform is extremely significant for it helps students in effective learning of the discipline. Interactions with documentary film maker Anees K. Mappila, winner of the National Award for *The Slave Genesis*, a documentary on the Paniya community, and director Prathap Joseph, the maker of *Randuper Chumbikkumbol*, followed by screenings of the films, and the invited talk on Film Theory By Dr. A. Hariprasad of EFLU are among the major events.
- In order to initiate critical thinking and enquiry, a new forum *Palavicharam* was initiated by independent forum of teachers. It organised 10 meetings where faculty shared and discussed their work in progress. *Palavicharam* also organised a three day programme, “Invitation to Philosophy of Science” (2.11-2016 to 4.11.2016).
- *Akam Samskarika Vedi*, is another a platform of students to initiate critical dialogue. It is organised by Malayalam department and conducted several debates including panel discussions on 15-07-2016 ( on “Writing Poetry”),29-07-2016 ( on ‘Thinking From Kerala’), 17-08-2016 ( on “ Folklore and Society’),27-07-2018 ( on “ Censorship and Freedom of expression”) and on 8-08-2018 ( on ‘ Writing Stories’).
- A weekly presentation programme for PG students namely, *Inflow*, that offers a platform where students could present their ideas, get insights from the community of teachers and research scholars, and develop the ideas into research papers is functional in the college. The platform is focussed to encourage research right from the PG level.
- Students Union initiates many debates and discussion in the campus, providing space for enquiry and innovation. On 2016 July 27, Students’ Union, in collaboration with Queer Pride Kerala 2016 organised a debate on ‘Sexuality Politics and Resistances’ in which Chinchu Aswathi spoke about her trans sexual identity and Maneesha shared her experiences as a trans person.
- *Malayala Gaveshakakkootam* is another Platform of Research Scholars in Department of Malayalam. It organised four debates by Dr. K.S.Madhavan ( on 16-9-2017), Dr.Aju K Narayanan( on 28-10-2017), Dr.C.B.Sudhakaran( 31-7-2018) and Dr. C.R.Prasad (on 31-7-2018) on themes of contemporary relevance.
- As part of Quasquicentennial anniversary celebration, in ‘Brennen Thalassery Book Fair and Literary Festival’, four panel discussions were organised. These panels involved leading thinkers and writers of the state.
- The Literary Forum of the PG Department of English, *Meraki* (A Motley Crew of Zealous Spirits), takes initiatives to organise multidisciplinary engagements that involve writers, academicians, artists and activists. The forum was inaugurated by Kalpatta Narayanan, writer, critic and columnist. Since then, the forum conducts programmes that open up newer horizons to learning minds.
- *Centrum*, a programme of the PG Department of English conducts invited lectures on topics of academic and contemporary relevance. Three lectures were conducted since its inception - Dr. K.K. Kunhammad on ‘Cultural Studies: Paradigms and Practices’, Dr. Arunlal Mokeri on ‘Stream of Consciousness: A Reflection on Postmodern

Fiction,' Dr. Y. V. Kannan on 'Incantations of Resistance: Political Perspectives of Pottan Theyyam.'

### **Evidence of Success**

Two centres of Excellence were proposed during the last five years following the vibrant interactions among the faculty, research scholars and other students. The need for doing inter disciplinary research was positively taken up by the academic community. In humanities BICCS and in Science. 'Centre of Excellence for Environment' became operational with the strong support of state government and the community. The thrust areas of current research including Environment, Nano sciences, Atmospheric sciences, conservation, taxonomy and molecular biology, also provide research facility and expertise to the academic community. The Centre of Excellence for Environment is all set to establish a fully modernized laboratory with a well equipped sophisticated instrumentation facility. This will grow into an initiative which could provide sophisticated research facility to the students and researchers from various institutions in the area. They intend to do molecular barcoding in the organism identification with short sequences of conserved genes. The impact of the research in the centre is hoped to bring breakthrough results that will immensely help the society to overcome many of the basic issues related to environment and standard of life.

### **Problems Encountered and Resources Required**

For the centres of excellence these platforms are less institutional than independent. They do not operate in correspondence to the academic calendar of the institution. Since the activities are organized after the usual academic responsibilities, availability of time is one of the challenges.

These platforms have the potential to emerge as knowledge hubs, if they can be properly facilitated. Interactions with thinking minds are an essential requirement for the growth of a thought platform, and this requires resources, monetary and otherwise. Non-availability of funds prevents the community from organizing larger events that would help extend the scope of the platforms. The state should also provide supportive legal and institutional structures including innovation friendly audit, special funding provisions etc.

### **7. Notes**

The 'culture of Dialogue is a 'sine qua non' practice of every centres of academic enquiry. As such it should be established in the institutions of higher learning to supplement classroom learning. It provides a real space for critical enquiry and open debates. The net result is the transformation of students into independent thinkers, actors and better human beings. But before venturing into such an academic practice the academia should ensure critical institutional space and intellectual learning environments. We also recommend a reframing of curriculum in tune with spirit of enquiry and discussion to supplement the 'culture of dialogue.'