

CATEGORY 7.2

BEST PRACTICES

CRITERIA 7

YEAR 2023-24

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Best Practices- 01

1.1. Title-

Awareness of Avenues in Architecture

1.2. Objectives of the Practice

The objectives of this practice are to create awareness...

1. among students about the various avenues of architecture.
2. about architecture in the community around us.
3. that architecture practices can contribute to social causes.

1.3. The Context:

Architecture is a part and parcel of our everyday life because we need shelters. However, the shelter may or may not be designed by an architect. Many living beings design their own shelter. Humans have designed their dwelling which was a result of trials and errors of over a thousand years. Architecture has evolved and today we have structures that are sky-rocketing and aiming to be built on other planets. After a continuous dialogue with all stakeholders of the institute, we realised that students need to be made aware of the diverse nature of architecture. We also realised the need to raise this awareness among the locals and learn from the unique surroundings that we are placed in. Students and faculty must realise that architecture may not necessarily be for serving the elite and wealthy but also for serving the community. This practice aligns with our goal of inculcating value-laden education.

1.4. The Practice:

A three-way model is developed for implementing this practice. One where the institute goes ahead and connects with the outside world and second where we invite various professionals to the campus.

In the first model, we conduct sessions in schools of neighbouring villages where we introduce school students and teachers to the profession of architecture and the professional avenues available after this course. We also conduct mobile exhibitions and connect with higher secondary school students in urban areas.

In the second model, we facilitate the industry-academia tie-up and conduct seminars and workshops where professionals are invited to share their projects, way of working and ideologies with our students. These too are in various modes. The most frequent are the 'Weekly Forums', which motivate and inspire the students.

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We have sessions on Caricatures, IPR, Psychology of the Built Environment, Structural Systems informing Design, the Role of an Architect, etc. Every semester a larger seminar is conducted that coincides with the Foundation Day and Exhibition inauguration.

At periodic intervals, we conduct a major event like ARCASIA or a Workshop with COA where students get a wider exposure.

We have collaborated with various organisations like Ethos and Maharashtra Step Wells Campaign and ongoing research on energy audits, RESIDE. Live projects coming through them motivate students to do good meaningful work. Students are also encouraged to be involved in research and live projects undertaken by the School and the faculty individually.

They are given due credits in the respective subjects. The institute encourages students to conduct research that helps them connect to topics of their interest. They may range from, learning through immediate surroundings/ community to hi-tech structural systems or project management. Eg: The architectural character of the Village houses or the Cultural Geography of the heritage structures. This kind of grounded approach helps our students to stay humble, create empathy and become aware of one's surroundings, and that of various cultures and people. It helps them realise that architecture is not all glitz and glamour. It also has a humane and mundane element. Exposure to this wide nature is essential in our country where we have only 5% of people who commission architects to build for them, 67% who stay in villages and build for themselves and others who cannot even afford their services. During the pandemic-induced Lockdown, we quickly adapted to the online version and invited a diverse range of speakers from across the country. Our College Instagram Channel quickly became popular for its uniquely refreshing and informative content.

1.5. Evidence of Success

Students love hands-on learning. We noticed students were motivated and enthusiastic after the lockdown-induced lethargy. They realised the need to put in the effort to succeed and that each one of them can carve a niche for themselves instead of treading on the beaten path. Credit-based learning for engaging in live projects encourages deserving students to get involved in diverse topics. A healthy competition is induced wherein the students on their own accord get involved in live projects or documentation work. We may not be able to quantify this kind of tacit learning but what we observe is the students' positivity and their sense of belief in our institute and faculty.

1.6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

The following problems were faced.

1. Identifying the schools and colleges in the surrounding areas and establishing a rapport with them. Our librarian, Mr. Sagar Bhoite played a leading role in this effort. He enthusiastically connected with the schools and also went ahead to impart exposure to architecture assisting other teaching faculty in the endeavour.
2. Sourcing the professionals each week was another issue; so we planned alternate weeks of guest lectures and our faculty taking up a subject close to our heart.

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3. Every faculty contributed to sourcing the guest lectures by digging into their professional and personal networks.
4. Organising a session every week requires a lot of manpower and discipline, all the faculty came together and filled in for each other whenever required for the sessions to be put together.
5. A protocol has now been set for such events.

1.7. Notes (Optional):

There are miles to go before we feel we have arrived, but we have decided to take a small step at a time and witness the compounding effect in a few years. We continue to brainstorm and encourage new ideas from all teaching / non-teaching staff as well as students for the betterment of the learning process. Ultimately, it is the students' positive learning experience which will contribute towards their success and that of the Institute.

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2.0 Best Practices for Fostering Freedom of Expression and Trust in Architectural Education

2.1 Introduction:

In the field of architectural education, creating an environment of mutual trust and freedom of expression is crucial for the growth and development of students. By encouraging open dialogue and creating a positive studio and campus environment, the objective is to instill a sense of security and foster meaningful interactions among all stakeholders. This refined write-up highlights the best practices implemented to achieve these objectives and the evidence of success observed in the context of architectural education.

2.2 The objective of the Practice:

The primary objectives of implementing best practices for freedom of expression and trust in architectural education are as follows:

1. Establishing mutual trust and belief: Creating an environment where trust and belief thrive among all stakeholders, including students and faculty.
2. Encouraging open sharing of feelings and opinions: Promoting an atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions to both their peers and faculty without inhibition.
3. Emphasizing dialogue for problem-solving: Cultivating an understanding that constructive dialogue among all stakeholders leads to effective problem-solving and collaborative solutions.
4. Fostering a sense of security: Instilling a feeling of security among all individuals involved in the educational process, thereby creating a safe space for exploration and growth.

2.3 The Context:

The traditional notion of strict obedience and hierarchical relationships between teachers and students is gradually being replaced by more student-centered and facilitative approaches. The role of a teacher or "guru" in architectural education is evolving towards being a respected facilitator, commanding respect through expertise rather than demanding it. Striking a balance between maintaining respect and becoming a friend to students poses a challenge, but it is essential to cultivate lifelong relationships of mutual respect and happiness. At the institute, student counselling and mentorship are integrated into the teaching-learning process

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2.4 The Practice

2.4 A. Studio Environment:

- Positive studio environment: Students are provided equal opportunities to explain their assignments, either in groups or through one-on-one interactions. Feedback is framed as design criticism, focusing on constructive and appreciative aspects to nurture critical thinking while acknowledging students' strengths.
- Gradual removal of inhibitions: Inhibitions of speaking in public are gradually addressed, fostering inclusivity and appreciation for diverse cultures. Teachers recognize individual students' personalities and strengths, assigning tasks accordingly. Public praise and private reprimand guide the feedback process.
- Group studies and outdoor activities: Group studies conducted outdoors serve as platforms for developing long-term bonds and recognizing students' uniqueness. Students are encouraged to share personal improvements, fostering a supportive atmosphere.

2.4 B. Campus Environment:

- Faculty awareness: Faculty members are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses, maintaining respectful conversations and addressing concerns through open dialogue. Approachability of faculty is emphasized.

2.4 C- Faculty Involvement in Extracurricular Activities:

- Active participation: Faculty members actively participate in students' extracurricular activities, providing encouragement and demonstrating their expertise. Involvement ranges from cultural event themes to verifying the structural stability of installations during exhibitions.
- Student-led initiatives: The Student Council runs various clubs, and while faculty initially played an active role, students now manage them independently. These clubs, such as the sketching club and poetry club, provide platforms for creative expression and collaboration.

D. The Tangibles:

- Barrier-free seating arrangements: Circular seating arrangements are sometimes employed to eliminate the instructor-learner barrier, promoting open discussions.
- Human-centric education: Fostering empathy and acceptance of other cultures through a student-centered approach, preparing students for professional growth without fixating solely on results.

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2.5 Evidence of Success

2.5 A. Respecting students' sentiments regarding celebrating festivals:

- - Students are actively encouraged to celebrate various festivals, fostering a sense of cultural inclusivity and allowing them to express their traditions.
- - During the 10-day Ganeshotsav, students create Ganpati idols, decorate the mandap, and perform Puja, promoting creativity and religious observance.
- - Navratri is celebrated with enthusiasm, as students participate in dandiya raas, showcasing their festive spirit and engagement.
- - Deepawali, or deepotsav, brings the entire campus to life with the illumination of diyas, creating a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere.
- - Shivaji Jayanti is commemorated through street plays that depict the valour of the Maratha warriors, showcasing the diverse historical heritage of India.
- - The involvement of a wide variety of students in these festivities demonstrates the institute's commitment to tapping into students' expertise and fostering a sense of community.

2.5 B. Exposure to Cultural Diversity in India:

- - Architectural Design Projects provide students with an opportunity to design in response to different cultural influences, promoting an appreciation for diversity.
- - An audit course on Culinary Skills focuses on the food cultures of various communities, allowing students to explore and learn about different culinary traditions.
- - These initiatives promote cultural understanding and expose students to the rich tapestry of Indian culture, enhancing their knowledge and broadening their perspectives.

2.5 C. Strengthening of trust:

- - The institute has actively worked to rebuild trust among students by engaging in meaningful conversations and addressing their concerns with empathy.
- - Students feel comfortable approaching faculty for advice on various aspects, including choosing the right office for training, selecting career paths, and pursuing further education.
- - The canteen staff contribute to a jovial environment, keeping both students and faculty in good spirits, while faculty members also share their own recipes with the canteen, fostering a sense of camaraderie.

2.5 D. Mutually respectful environment and healthy competition:

- - The institute has cultivated a mutually respectful environment that encourages healthy competition, eliminating jealousy and fostering a positive atmosphere.
- - Instances of loss of sheets or journals during critical times have been significantly reduced, indicating a sense of responsibility and trust among students.
- - Students recognize and appreciate each other's strengths and weaknesses, standing up for their teammates and fostering a supportive community.
- - The nurturing of a safe space within the institute has created an environment where students feel secure and can freely express themselves.

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Overall, these evidences demonstrate the success of the institute in promoting cultural diversity, fostering trust, and creating a respectful and inclusive environment for students to thrive.

- **Problems Encountered and Resources Required**

We have encountered problems in mentoring methods, specifically in establishing a connection without invading personal space or being carried away by students. While our intent is right, some faculty struggle with this aspect. To address the issue, we have sought guidance from psychologists to learn effective techniques for encouraging students to open up and communicate. We are currently in a learning phase. Recognizing that some individuals have an intuitive ability for mentoring, others learn from observing them. To address serious issues, having an in-house psychologist would be preferable to ensure proper resolution.