

First Best Practice

1) **Title of the Practice:**

Creating a robust package of mental health interventions

2) **Objective of the Practice:**

To address the mental health needs of students without medicalizing their struggles with their life problems

3) **Context:**

It has been found that all institutions of higher education especially centers of excellence are confronted with problems of anxiety, depression, panic attacks and addictions. It is therefore imperative to firstly acknowledge the problem and then create a range of interventions as amongst the first fact which needs acknowledgement in mental health is that one size does not fit all so necessary to devise a range of interventions.

4) **The practice:**

The University has a counsellor on campus since 2014. She was on campus on dedicated days along with being available on phone 24x7. The counsellor was combined with a practitioner in restorative justice who with support circles of students and faculty helped many distressed students resolve their interpersonal conflicts. When the earlier counsellor needed to go on maternity leave the university hired an art therapist along with a traditional counsellor. The student body of the university came up with a program of peer to peer counselling wherein students were counselled by their peers on how to respond to their life challenges. In addition, meditational support was facilitated for several students

This package was completed by the university's policy of reasonable accommodation and zero tolerance of casteist, sexist and ableist behavior. In its commitment to explore a range of interventions the CASH Committee of the University held a theatrical poetry performance on the value of friendship where the performers had an extended conversation on the value of friendships after the performance.

5) **Evidence of Success:**

The practice has been devised in recognition of the difference between positive mental health and mental distress. There is need to address both. Further no one intervention can address the needs of all and hence it is important to create a menu card of interventions, which it caters to the different needs of students. The fact that each of these practices has helped some student or the

other is to us the biggest evidence of its success. As the practice envisages that we keep on adding new interventions to the menu and new interventions have been added from year to year is the second proof of its success. That the university and the students are committed to enhancing the repertoire is the third evidence of its success.

6) **Problems encountered:**

Even as we have expanded our repertoire and there is a lot more on offer at NALSAR, than is provided in other institutions. Many a time we are confronted with situations for which we do not have a solution. In those situations, operating on the aphorism of half a loaf is better than none we have extended to the students what is available but this is evidently not a satisfactory situation hence the university is intent on expanding its repertoire so that no need is left unaddressed.

Second Best Practice

1) **Title of the Practice:**

Enhancing fairness in examination evaluation

2) **Objective of the Practice:**

To enhance the fairness component in evaluation

3) **Context:**

In evaluation practices there has been this constant tussle between internal and external evaluation. Both having their advantages and disadvantages. Whilst internal evaluation seems to entrench bias and nepotism; external evaluation severs the connection between teaching and testing. NALSAR went for a two- section system from 2016?? In order to deepen institutional expertise, it was decided that whilst both sections will have a common curriculum and the same exam paper the critical question was how should evaluation be undertaken. In the first exam under the new system whilst the exam paper was set by both teachers, each teacher corrected the exam papers of its section. Nobody was happy with the result. The teachers felt that the other colleague had not understood the nuance of the question and the students felt that the same question had been evaluated differently.

4. The practice:

In order to address the aforementioned problems, it was decided that the questions will be corrected by the teacher who has set them across both sections. The result of the practice is that whilst the faculty are internal evaluators for students from their own section, they are external evaluators for students of the other section. If one teacher is liberal and the other strict, the system self corrects as students receive both kinds of correction. It also provides evidence of confirmation bias if the students of the teacher's own section perform disproportionately better. Thus, there is opportunity for self- correction. When students do well with both sets of teachers there is more objective evidence of their competence.

5. Evidence of Success:

The practice by providing hard data on the evaluation practice of each teacher is allowing more reflective evaluation to take place and hence has contributed to the building of a more robust system of evaluation. The substantial reduction in confirmation bias is the most objective evidence of the success of the practice.

6. Problems encountered and resources required:

The system is limited to mandatory courses hence it does not address the problems of fairness in elective and seminar courses. Further, it provides evidence of the bias but does not offer any certain solution. The reasonableness of the teacher or the persuasiveness of the academic coordinator are not systemic solutions.