GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
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Best Practice I:

Title of the Practice

Online Remote Learning and Green Digital Initiatives

Objectives of the Practice

Maulana Azad College has provided substantial impetus to digital learning initiatives in the last few years. Its objective is to encourage imparting of education through the use of new-age technology. Utilizing said technology helps to

 a) improve the quality of lectures using assistive tools,

b) ensure minimal disruption of classes through the option of remote attendance, and

c) improve digital awareness, all of which together constitute the underlying drivers or principles of this practice.

The intended outcome of this practice is to positively augment the educational process, increase attendance and in the longer term, allow widespread digital adoption among both students and employees, as also furthering the cause of a green campus through reduced use of paper.

The Context

Maulana Azad College has supplemented regular classroom teaching with digital learning initiatives substantially. Even prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the college had started its digital adoption journey in the context of imparting education. The admission process (both undergraduate and

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postgraduate courses) was online, and examination marks were uploaded to the university examination portal instead of manual tabulation. Moreover, faculty members were increasing accessibility of study materials outside the classroom by using email and social media channels. When in-person classes were adjourned due to the Pandemic-induced lockdown, the pace of this practice vastly improved. However, with the reopening of in-person classes as the Pandemic subsided, digital adoption in its various forms did not decline. On the contrary, they remained as an integral part of the education system, having already proven their utility. The college was able to seamlessly incorporate digital learning initiatives into its routine process, and today it has emerged as a leading practice.

The Practice

Maulana Azad College has been practising a range of activities to boost online/remote learning and automation:

- A dedicated Learning Management System (LMS) named AIMES Cloud was incorporated into the college website.

- Google Workspace accounts for all teachers, with features like Google Classroom (for uploading study materials and giving assignments to students) and Google Meet (for conducting live audio-visual classes through video-conferencing links). The college purchased Multiple G-Suite accounts for teaching-learning to accommodate a larger number of student-participants. Some faculty members also used other platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.

- 32 out of 54 i.e. more than half of the classrooms are ICT-enabled with overhead LCD Projectors. Other than these, the Principal's Chamber and Library are also ICT-enabled.

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- There are 11 smart classrooms with smartboard, computing equipment and display, and one of these rooms has been converted into a Studio with Live Streaming and Recording facility.

- The college has more than 200 computers (desktops and laptops), and 6 Computer Labs. There are 3 internet connections through LAN and Wi-Fi with a combined broadband width of 200-300 MBPS.

- Add-on courses on Excel, LaTeX, SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), etc. were offered to students to make them digitally proficient.

- Certificate course on Basic Computing & Office Automation was offered to minority girl students free of cost.

- Certificate course on R Programming & STATA was offered to Economics, Statistics, Mathematics and Sociology students; that on Financial Accounting in GST-Tally.ERP 9 to Commerce students to acquaint them with accounting software.

- The college website has separate tabs for News & Notices, Admission, LMS, University Examination, Feedback, Grievances, etc. so that students can complete requisite procedures at the click of a mouse. There are links to external websites like UGC, University of Calcutta, etc. for convenient navigation to these resources. Students are also informed about placement opportunities, scholarships and Student Credit Card Scheme (an initiative of the Government of West Bengal) through this website.

- The Central Library of the college was digitized through the use of KOHA ILMS. E-books and E-journals were made available to the faculty members through DELNET, N-List INFLIBNET. Virtual Attendance System (VAS), including bar-code scanner and Gate Registry Software (GRS),

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monitors the footfall here. The list of books is available for public readers through web OPAC, and an OPAC Kiosk is inside the library. The Library cards of students and faculty members have been converted into Smart Cards. The Librarian took the initiative to register students under National Digital Library of India (NDLI) during the Pandemic. Book identification through RFID, sensor-based drop box for returning books during after-hours and a kiosk for self-check-in/check-out of books are in place.

Constraints and/or limitations encountered in the course of implementing this best practice include paucity of funds for implementing cutting-edge technology.

Evidence of Success

- The initiatives on the part of the college for the extensive use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) tools has resulted in a major advancement in the field of pedagogy. This is particularly true in the case of Continuous Internal Evaluation (CIE) because it is easier to track the performance of students using software like Excel and Google Workspace. For eg. faculty members can import grades from Google Classroom and add sparkline graphs using Google Sheets.

- The process of mapping Course Outcome and Program Outcome (CO-PO), which was rather cumbersome when done manually, has now become convenient with the use of softwares like Excel or Google Sheets.

- Faculty members have started to register with ORCID and/or VIDWAN and upload their research work on ResearchGate, Academia.edu, DSpace, etc. Such Open Educational Resources (OER) Repositories enable greater dissemination of academic output and are beneficial to students looking for additional study materials without putting any extra financial burden on them.

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- The college has benefited by adopting automation, using E-Office softwares like Human Resource Management System (HRMS) under West Bengal Integrated Financial Management System (WBIFMS). It also uses around 10 other softwares including MATLAB, PYTHON, R and Tally.

- Embracing these digital modes has not only quickened the pace of work but also led to less usage of paper, thereby giving a fillip to the college's efforts for establishing a green and environment-friendly campus.

Problems Encountered and Resources Required

These initiatives are usually taken by the faculty members of the Science departments as they are better acquainted with the latest Edu-tech tools. It would be helpful if faculty members of all departments of the college are encouraged to utilize these digital resources to the utmost. A training workshop to this end can go a long way in making them tech-savvy. Moreover, some of these softwares and gadgets are quite expensive and incur a recurrent cost. Hence, there might be slight delay in renewing their membership due to shortage of funds at times.

Notes (Optional)

The practice of transitioning to digital means for the purpose of teaching-learning can be emulated by other institutions in order to facilitate the exposure of students to latest technology as well as furthering the cause of a green campus.

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