

Best practices – 2018-2019

Best Practice 1

1. Title of the Practice

Upcycling –The use of salvaged timber from fallen trees and steel from renovated buildings on campus to furnish the academic/ residential/ administrative blocks.

2. Objectives of the Practice

Upcycling is better described as creative reuse. The goal is to prevent wasting potentially useful materials generated on campus, reducing purchase and consumption of new raw materials. It is the art of turning old/leftover materials into value added products. Upcycling becomes dually important because it reduces the amount of waste produced. It reduces the need for virgin material for newer generations of products. This is an environment friendly, sustainable practice that is cost effective and has helped the college cut down on expenses in furniture purchase and design to the tune of lakhs over the last few years.

3. The Context

The process itself can be time consuming and laborious and may require an Upcycling unit of some kind and people with the knowhow, for effective implementation. That challenge has been overcome by the institution. Having an in-house work force for upcycling resources on campus is a unique feature in WCC and is a challenge that the institution has admirably taken in its stride. A workshop on campus with the necessary implements, experts with an eye for design and a skilled workforce are some of the highlights of this arrangement.

4. The Practice

Academics and extracurricular activities are not the only areas of focus in WCC. A holistic approach in higher education is what the institution works towards, thus making a responsible citizen of every student who passes through its portals. Environmental Stewardship is something that the college firmly believes in. Whether protecting and replenishing its natural resources by planting more trees, rainwater harvesting systems, or reducing the waste generated on campus by recycling in the form of vermicomposting or building bottle benches, or as in this case, upcycling salvaged timber and steel from campus into furniture and other utility/aesthetic products, the institution has always been an exemplary model of a community that believes in being responsible for and conscious of its environment. Upcycling of salvaged wood and steel from campus is an initiative that has resulted in the completion of around 260 pieces of furniture/ aesthetic and utility items that are used in various academic and residential blocks. The only drawback/limitation in this initiative perhaps is the time taken for processing the timber/ steel and for completing the intended product. These are some of the finished products that have emerged from this initiative. Wood from fallen Samanea saman on campus were used to make student chairs with writing pads (Florence Theophilus Block), chairs and tables for teachers, platforms in classrooms at the Centenary Block, podium for the chapel, and partitions that are used in the Marjorie Conference Room and one of the hostels (Coon Hostel). Wood from the *Thespesia populnea* has been made into the two elegant almirahs that now grace the Staff Lounge. The *Millingtonia* and *Tabebuia* are some of the other trees whose wood has been put to good use in the form of chairs and teapots. The chairs in the Elizabeth George

Conference Room are of the wood from the Millingtonia on campus. The inner framework reapers taken from the Auditorium were crafted into Chapel benches, lampshades, frames for mosquito nets to be used in one of the hostels, and a stand that is used in the fabric dyeing unit of the Department of Chemistry. MS (Mild Steel) flats recovered from the Science Block ceiling have been used for making grills in the hostel and the framework required for the Shade House, (Department of Plant Biology and Plant Biotechnology).

5. Evidence of Success

This initiative has resulted in the reduction of the waste disposed. We have moved on from reducing, reusing, recycling to upcycling which has helped in promoting a regenerative design culture where the end products are cleaner, healthier and have better value than the original material. This practice showcases the ability of the institution to put to good use, resources available on campus be it raw materials or manpower and its unflinching efforts towards fostering a culture of being a community of environmentally conscious people. An initiative of this kind will go a long way in making a success of the efforts taken by the institution towards ensuring carbon neutrality. At a time when issues like global warming and deforestation are being discussed with great concern across the globe, this practice in WCC can be seen as a trailblazer of sorts. Not only has the institution retained and nurtured its green cover zealously over the past century, it has also put in place initiatives that foster a culture of regeneration and sustainability. Last but not the least, this practice is also a cost effective way of designing and procuring appropriate, sometimes even unique articles/products for furnishing the buildings on campus.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Establishing a workshop/ recycle unit, lack of space and employing skilled manpower are potential problems that can hinder the effective implementation of this practice. In WCC, however, all three hurdles have been smoothly overcome and the practice has been carried out effectively over the last few years. The only exception, perhaps, was during the onslaught of Vardah in December 2016, when the cyclonic storm had wreaked havoc on campus leaving in its trail fallen trees, branches and debris everywhere. Even in the face of this crisis the college community, swung into action. Within a very short span of time the campus was cleared of the fallen trees and branches. Each one of them was stacked neatly in unobtrusive corners on campus and most of them are already being upcycled into functional finished products.

7. Notes

Upcycling is a practice that is restorative and regenerative and can lead to the fostering of an environment conscious community that works towards sustainability and development in a disturbing global where wasting resources has become a reality. As an institution that believes in the motto 'Lighted to Lighten', it is yet another step that WCC has taken in the recent past to make its mark on the community and the environment by playing the role of a corporate body that is conscious of adopting cost effective methods of meeting requirements wherever possible, while remaining conscious of and upholding its commitment to its self-imposed responsibility of environmental stewardship. Other institutions of higher education may do well to emulate its example as the need of the hour is to put into practice measures and initiatives that will make a responsible individual of every student who passes through their portals.

Best Practice 2

1. Title of the Practice

Proficiency Based English for Communication Skills Course offered in four levels

2. Objectives of the Practice

The Department of English has been offering a unique, level based Foundation English Course, for learners with varying proficiency levels. Its objectives are Shift from following a content based approach to a skill based one Equip the student with the skills required for effective communication and employment, on graduation. Consideration of the different proficiency levels of the learners develop their skills in homogenous groups, through an outcome based module Bridge the gap between the rote learning, content based approach encouraged in schools and the competence based, outcome oriented training provided in college.

3. The Context

The Course was designed keeping in mind the spectrum of student competencies ranging from those proficient enough in the language skilled at creative/ journalistic/ academic writing and communication to others from regional medium of instruction for whom framing simple sentences in English pose a problem. Learners are divided into different proficiency levels based on diagnostic tests. A syllabus for every semester in each level is framed using a task based framework that will help training in required skill sets in gradual progression. Conventional content based text books were done away with and a three-level General English Course, Courses I, II and III was launched, with Course III intended for learners Proficient in English. Material production, therefore, was another challenge faced by the faculty. This initiative evolved over the years and is now a four-level English for Communication Skills course, offered at the Advanced, Intermediate, Basic and Fundamental levels. The faculty of the Department was put through sufficient training before implementing this course, with inputs and guidance from academic experts at EFLU, Hyderabad.

4. The Practice

Taking on an experimental learning endeavor of this kind was a ground breaking effort on the part of WCC at a time when conventional pedagogical methods were still being followed in many other institutions of higher education across the State. This Course, which can be considered a pioneering effort by the Department of English, was launched with the aim of training students in effective communication skills and to equip them with the competence required to face the demands of societal roles and the challenges of the workplace. This is a brief overview of the Course. At the entry level, the learners are put through a series of diagnostic tests and writing tasks to assess their competence in the language. Based on this assessment, they are placed in the level that is best suited for them. This may not necessarily be the case for the entire course, spanning four semesters. Upward mobility is possible between levels. At the end of two semesters the learner may, depending on her performance, be able to move up to the next level for the subsequent semesters. The Course is designed in such a way that the four skills required for language learning – listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW) – are incorporated into the curriculum. This Course is further enhanced and complemented by a two-semester Skill Based Course offered by the Department (also in four levels) on English usage and spoken & presentation skills. In both courses, each level has a

syllabus for every semester. Over a period of four semesters, therefore, this amounts to twenty-four independent language training modules offered by the Department of English for students pursuing their undergraduate study. The Course has been welcomed and put to good use by the students who are the primary stakeholders benefitting from this practice. The two language labs have also helped in enhancing the learning experience. Periodic revisions have been made in the curriculum based on the feedback received from students. This is in addition to the inputs from members on the Department's Board of Studies which includes (besides student representatives and the faculty) academicians/ subject experts, representatives from industry and alumnae of the Department. As a Course that is designed on the principles of relevance and functionality, its aim was and continues to be bringing about tangible outcomes in terms of learner progression, personality development and employability.

5. Evidence of Success

Besides employment statistics and the number of students pursuing higher studies within the country and abroad, other indicators of the success include positive student feedback received at the institutional level during the Academic Council and Board of Studies meetings. This Course aims to rise up to the challenges and demands of the contemporary world. It attempts to address the language needs of the learner in order to equip them for employment, social interaction and roles they will take on in the various spheres of life. This approach falls within an international frame of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment. Be it the British Council and its CELTA course for teaching English as a foreign language or CEFR(Common European Framework of Reference) designed by Cambridge English Language Assessment, or the eligibility tests for studying/working abroad such as the IELTS, each one of them follows this competency based approach. Some institutions in the city, which have experimented with this system t have given up this approach and moved on to conventional methods again. However at WCC, this pedagogy has been an effective and sustainable practice.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required

The Course has been effective over the years because of the methodology adopted. One of the recent challenges faced in running of this Course, however, is dealing with the large number of students in every class. Though the Department has taken this challenge in its stride, a more realistic teacher student ratio in any institution of higher education will in fact go a long way in enhancing the success of such courses. Bridging the gap between learner competence/requirements and expected outcomes is and will continue to be a challenge as long as the methodology adopted in schools remains unchanged. It is becoming increasingly important to train the student in the skills required to meet the challenges outside the institution. A shift from a content oriented approach to a skill based one will make the transition to higher education and employment less daunting for the student.